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Monastic sites and monastic estates in Somerset and Wiltshire in the Middle Ages : a regional approach.

MONASTIC SITES AND MONASTIC ESTATES IN SOMERSET AND WILTSHIRE IN THE MIDDLE AGES: A REGIONAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Most studies which have addressed monasteries and their estates at a broad level have done so by considering one order or type of houses, such as the Cistercians, Augustinians or female houses, across a region or nationally. In contrast, this thesis takes a regionally-orientated approach to the monastic landscape instead, and all of the houses of different orders within a defined area- the counties of Somerset and Wiltshire- have been studied. By doing this, the overall development of their estates and landholdings can be assessed. The study demonstrates to what a great degree patterns of endowment and foundation operated at a regional level and were influenced by pre-existing monasteries and estates. Somerset and Wiltshire were dominated by pre-Conquest monastic foundations which determined to a great extent the character of their religious landscape, and the two counties thus provide a very different picture to better-studied areas such as Wales or Yorkshire.

The thesis begins by examining the pattern of monastic foundation within the region in both the pre- and post-Conquest periods, in terms of the numbers and types of establishments and their size. It then examines themes that influenced the choice of site and the historical context of each foundation, and the distribution and organization of the monastic buildings and precinct. Finally, the economy of these houses is considered, first at a broad level, in terms of the pattern and size of the endowment observable across the region throughout the Middle Ages. Secondly, methods of relating this broad data to the physical landscape and examining the landscape impact of monastic estates are considered. The study focuses on three key historical surveys- Domesday Book, the Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV (1291) and the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (1535). Taking Platt's (1969) work as a starting point, it also investigates the potential of data from the nineteenth century tithe surveys for the mapping of monastic estates for houses of all orders.

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As indicated, maps and surveys are reproduced by permission of the Ordnance Survey, English Heritage, GSB Prospection and Videotext Communications Ltd. All the tithe maps used in this survey have been consulted at the Somerset Record Office and the Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office.

Many thanks are due to my family, for rescuing me at the eleventh hour. With greatest thanks and affection for enduring this thesis on a daily basis to Paul, Pip, Rae and Yos. Most especially, my thanks are due to Rob, whose patience and understanding have been limitless, and without whom, this thesis would *definitely* not exist.

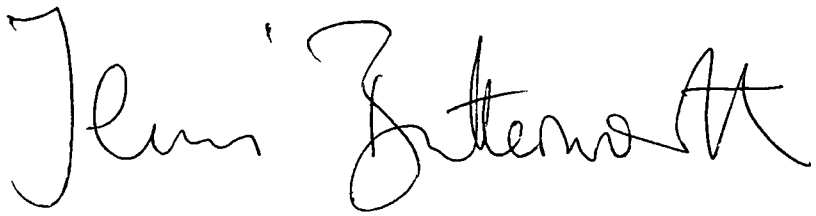
For all at 54 Banner Road

DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of the University of Bristol. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the dissertation has been submitted for any other degree.

Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Bristol.

The dissertation has not been presented to any other University for examination in either the United Kingdom or overseas.



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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

BRS	Bristol Record Society
BUAD	Bristol Urban Archaeology Database
GSB	GSB Prospection
OS	Ordnance Survey
PSANHS	Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeology and Natural History Society
RCHME	Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England*
SDNQ	Somerset and Dorset Notes and Queries
SEUS	Somerset Extensive Urban Survey
SMR	Sites and Monuments Record
SRS	Somerset Record Society
TBGAS	Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society
VCH	Victoria County History
WAM	Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine
WRS	Wiltshire Record Society

Taxatio Caley, J 1802 *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae auctoritate P.Nicholai IV circa AD 1291* Record Commission

Valor Ecclesiasticus

Caley, J, Hunter, J et al 1810-1834 *Valor Ecclesiastcus temp. Henr. VIII auctoritate regia institutus* Record Commission (in 6 volumes)

*Since April 1999, the RCHME has been merged with English Heritage. In the text, work carried out by the former RCHME is differentiated from that carried out under the auspices of the new merged organization. References are given as RCHME or English Heritage, depending on the date of publication.

1. INTRODUCTION

"Poking about in the rubble, I found at times scraps of parchment that had drifted down from the scriptorium and the library and had survived like treasures buried in the earth; I began to collect them, as if I were going to piece together the torn pages of a book... Mine was a poor harvest, but I spent a whole day reaping it, as if from those disiecta membra of the library a message might reach me... At the end of my patient reconstruction, I had before me a kind of lesser library, a symbol of the greater, vanished one: a library made up of fragments, quotations, unfinished sentences, amputated stumps of books."

Eco, U *The Name of the Rose* (1998: 500)

The surviving remains of monasteries are some of the most powerful physical expressions of medieval life and thought that exist today. Each one captures both the essence of the spiritual endeavour of the monastic community and its secular patrons, and also the economic power and influence required to realize and support such an enduring statement within the landscape. As a monumental focus for early antiquarians and scholars, monasteries have been similarly prominent in the development of nineteenth and twentieth century historical and archaeological enquiry. Many early excavations concentrated on the physical remains of monastic houses, whilst their key role in creating and preserving documentary records has dominated medieval history through the publication and study of their muniments.

However, new approaches in both archaeology and history in the post-war period have altered and expanded the emphasis of monastic research and now form the basis of modern enquiry. Several landmark historical studies addressed the estates of individual monasteries, such as the great Benedictine abbeys of Ely and Ramsey (Miller 1951; Raftis 1957), or more recently Bolton Priory and the see of Worcester (Kershaw 1973; Dyer 1980). They demonstrated the great potential of detailed ecclesiastical records for the reconstruction of the organization and administration of major land-owning institutions and thus the wider investigation of economy and society in the Middle Ages.

The same post-war period saw critical shifts in archaeological thought which also affected monastic research: the emergence of a processual, positivist paradigm within the discipline and the recognition of the importance of landscape. Both

resulted in the perception of monasteries as landowners and economic powerhouses, who played a fundamental and recognizable role in the functioning of the medieval economy and landscape. Earlier historical studies had addressed this issue (e.g. Savine 1909; Lobel 1935), but it was really in this period that research which addressed the physical evidence for the economic role of monasteries in an explicit fashion began to emerge.

The development of multi-disciplinary approaches to the investigation of the landscape (Hoskins 1955), led to a shift in emphasis away from monastic sites themselves to the recognition of monastic influence at a much broader and more fundamental level. Air photography (Knowles & St Joseph 1952) and survey, such as at Bordesley Abbey (Aston 1972), illustrated the remarkable preservation of the immediate landscape of monastic sites themselves, whilst a growing awareness of the depth and complexity of the surviving monastic landscape as a whole was exemplified by Platt's (1969) reassessment of the monastic grange. Archaeological studies began to produce integrated investigations of the physical evidence for monasteries and their estates as a landscape whole (Astill 1994, Greene 1989). Many key studies in recent decades have arisen from a cross-over with the historical geographical tradition. The mapping and quantification of the distribution of monastic estates, for the Cistercian order (Donkin 1978), the Augustinian order (Robinson 1980) and individual houses (Bond 1973, 1979), has brought a much needed geographical element that has linked historical evidence to the physical landscape and assessed their impact at a broad level.

Thus the inheritance of monastic archaeology and medieval landscape studies today is rooted primarily in a positivist, processual tradition. Monasteries have come to be studied as economic, as well as religious or architectural phenomena, built upon a system of estates that provided a managed system of resources and revenue. The physical investigation of the monasteries themselves is supplemented by study of their estates and properties, and they are viewed as prominent instigators of landscape development, not just monumental features within it.

Within this framework, several key issues concerning the study of the monastic landscape can be addressed. This thesis takes a broad-level approach to the analysis of monasteries and their estates, and its key premise is the importance of a

regional framework for doing this. The most common approach to this level of analysis of monastic estates has been the study of the houses of one order or congregation, either nationally or regionally. In Britain, the Cistercians have undoubtedly received the most attention at both levels (e.g. Donkin 1978; Williams 1984), but surveys also exist for some of the other orders (e.g. Robinson 1980; Aston 1993b). In the same vein, Gilchrist (1994) addressed the distribution and character of female houses nationally, looking at their pattern of foundation and physical remains, and Burton (1979) considered the nunneries of Yorkshire. Using these historical frameworks for analysis allows the character of each group of houses to be assessed and patterns of foundation and endowment to be established.

Each monastic house was established within an environment heavily influenced by local factors and relationships with pre-existing institutions and landscapes. The historical ideal of foundation was tempered by its context and in order to explore this relationship fully, a regional approach is required, that of studying *all* of the monastic houses of differing orders and their estates within a defined region. Thus the pattern of monastic foundation within Somerset and Wiltshire is established and placed within a national context in chapters 2 and 3. The following chapters explore the factors which played key roles in establishing this pattern and determining the monastic character of the region.

Regional historical studies generally have demonstrated remarkable success in investigating and reconstructing the developing character of a defined landscape unit. Blair's *Early medieval Surrey* (1991) for example, examined the development of the county before the twelfth century, and demonstrated the importance of the interaction between church and state in this critical period for shaping the character of its later landscape and economy. Faull and Moorhouse's *West Yorkshire: an archaeological survey to AD 1500* (1981) is essentially an assessment of archaeological potential rather than interpretative account, but it does demonstrate the wide depth and complexity of the region and the factors that influenced its development throughout the Middle Ages. Moorhouse (Moorhouse 1981: 583) emphasizes the importance of providing a broad historical and landscape framework for the interpretation of archaeological sites. This regional framework in these studies

permits an exploration of more detailed, locally-specific evidence within a broad context that relates wider conclusions to the investigation of the physical landscape.

Surprisingly few specifically monastic studies have been conducted at this level however. Early county surveys that do exist (e.g. Brakspear 1934) rarely address the landscape of monastic foundation and endowment, and lack a critical assessment of the overall impact of monastic landownership. Burrows (1985) attempted to bring a social dimension to the exploration of the acquisition and development of the estates of two Yorkshire houses, Nostell and Bridlington Priories. He proposed a new social 'geography of monastic property', although his work is firmly historical and lacks physical investigation or mapped elements to relate these developments to the regional landscape directly. In contrast, Courtney (1980) addressed the distribution and physical evidence for the monastic granges of Leicestershire, but his study was directed at the concept of the grange specifically, rather than the overall context of monastic endowment within a region.

Two authors have produced important works on monastic foundation in Yorkshire and the north-east. Burton (1999) provides the first comprehensive historical study of the development of the religious houses of Yorkshire. She demonstrates clearly the impact of monastic foundation and endowment on the social, cultural and economic landscape of the county. In two studies, one of north east Yorkshire (1962) and the other of the north east generally (1997), Waites retains a more firmly economic and landscape approach than Burton. He analyzes the development of monastic foundations, combined with accounts of their distribution and the overall pattern of monastic property within the region.

In this study, the author has attempted to look at both the foundation pattern of the religious houses themselves and the distribution of their property to create a contextual account of both monastic estates and the institutions that held them. It considers that the development of the wider monastic landscape of property ownership and ecclesiastical patronage was intrinsically linked to the historical development and distribution of the monastic houses themselves.

The second issue addressed by this study is the degree to which the monastic development of the region in the post-Conquest period was influenced by the

landscape inherited from the earliest phase of religious endowment. Many previous surveys of individual or groups of monasteries and their estates have concentrated on the north of England and Wales, where the impact of the Cistercian order in particular was extremely strong. In contrast, the two counties of Somerset and Wiltshire were historically at the heart of the West Saxon kingdom, and thus fall within an area that is striking for the high number of its pre-Conquest religious establishments and the ancient nature of its monastic landscape. A study of the Cistercian order in the West Country for example, similar to those that exist for Yorkshire or Wales, would make little sense for a region containing only two Cistercian foundations, and would not express the depth and complexity of the monastic landscape. By implication, the regional approach demonstrates that current archaeological research on the management and survival of the monastic landscape is heavily dominated by the geographical emphases of previous studies.

This thesis, as with monastic landscape research generally, draws upon a wide range of historical and archaeological evidence. Indeed, the immense scale and depth of the sources available is awe-inspiring, yet their use for the recognition and interpretation of monastic influence within the landscape remains problematic. The issue is primarily one of the management and interpretation of a large quantity of variable data rather than lack of evidence. The relationship between archaeological and historical data has traditionally been a slightly uneasy one, and the construction of a narrative that is coherent, yet does not make untenable assumptions about the correlation of both types of evidence, difficult.

One of the key aims of the thesis is to examine the use of these differing resources and evidence in landscape studies, and investigate the ability of modern research to manipulate them in order to recognize an intrinsically monastic element within the medieval landscape. The documentation concerning the organization and administration of monastic estates and the physical evidence for the development of the landscape do not always correlate to produce features that can be identified as specifically monastic. However, where detailed research does exist, it has demonstrated the huge potential of the historical and archaeological material for answering fundamental questions about landscape development (e.g. Williams 1976, Aston et al 1998). A regional framework has thus been used as a suitable level at which to bridge the gap between the broad analysis of the historical distribution of

monastic estates, and detailed research on the physical evidence for their impact on the landscape. This hermeneutic approach using the examination of individual detail within a wide context (Hodder 1992) facilitates the examination of a large quantity of data from many sources, and recognizes the practicalities of landscape research. The issue of the ability of research to identify a landscape that is intrinsically monastic can thus be addressed.

Finally, the title of the thesis queries the nature of this monastic landscape we are trying to reconstruct. The approach adopted by many medieval landscape archaeologists has been criticized in modern literature (Bender 1993) for its heavily economic and positivist outlook, which places emphasis on monasteries as landowning institutions, and their contribution to the development of the landscape as a product of their role as a powerful economic force within medieval society. Whilst they undoubtedly were, monasteries were also engaged upon a spiritual enterprise, which ultimately guided their foundation and economic endeavours. Chapters 4 and 5 address themes in the siting of monastic houses and the organization of their buildings and precincts, that recognize that a purely economic explanation of their development does not embrace its spiritual and social aspects.

1.1 The study region: Somerset and Wiltshire[1]

The adjoining counties of Somerset and Wiltshire have been chosen as the study region for this thesis. Initially, it was hoped to select a more historically or geographically cohesive region than this: given the importance of the pre-Conquest history of the area in shaping monastic development, an examination of the entire Wessex area would have been the most desirable choice. However, this would have more than doubled the study region, and was not possible within the limits of the thesis. Conversely, other criteria that could have been applied, such as choosing one geographic zone, tended to create too small a region.

[1] The study region is referred to throughout as 'The West Country', and this phrase is used specifically to indicate the two counties and not as a general regional indicator, for which the term 'south west' is used.

Ultimately, therefore, political or ecclesiastical units were felt to be most appropriate. Ancient counties provide good regional sample areas, across which themes can be examined (e.g. Blair (1991); Burton (1999); Waites (1997)), and both Somerset and Wiltshire are ancient administrative units and correspond reasonably well with medieval ecclesiastical boundaries. The choice of two counties is, admittedly, a relatively arbitrary selection, but one made to provide a manageable area for study- small enough to enable some depth of analysis, yet large enough to produce internal contrasts and avoid some of the county and diocese-based peculiarities in the available reference material.

The two counties cover approximately 8500 square kilometres in extent (Figure 1.1). Until the establishment and subsequent dissolution of the county of Avon in the 1970s, the two county boundaries have remained remarkably stable throughout their history. Several parishes in north Wiltshire that were transferred to Gloucestershire in 1896 and 1930 (Stevenson 1991: 5) are historically part of Wiltshire and have been included in the study region, as have the southern parishes of Martin and Damerham which were similarly transferred to Hampshire. The two detached portions of Wiltshire that covered the monastic houses of Kingswood and Poulton, now in Gloucestershire, have not been included.

In ecclesiastical terms, the area covered by the two counties corresponds closely with the diocese of Bath and Wells and the two western archdeaconries of the diocese of Salisbury, namely Wiltshire and Salisbury. The city of Bristol has been included in the region to provide an urban element to the study. It was one of the greatest ports and cities of the realm in the Middle Ages and its economic influence on the surrounding area was great. This is reflected in the number of monasteries in the two counties that owned property in the city, and to omit it from the study would have left a considerable gap in the overall picture of the monastic economy.

The West Country consists of several distinct regional zones which give it a diverse environmental and topographical character (Figure 1.2). The western border of Somerset is formed by the Bristol Channel, and the county is primarily underlain by Mesozoic sandstones, mudstones and clays, with older red sandstone to the west. It is dominated by the Somerset Levels, a unique wetland landscape centred on several large river systems- Parrett, Brue, Axe and Yeo- that run south-east to north-

west across the county. The Levels consist of low-lying estuarine clays and alluvium combined with inland areas of peat moor, both of which have been subject to periods of marine and freshwater inundation throughout their history (Rippon 1994: 239). The area is characterized by clay and sand 'islands' of raised ground, upon which some of the region's most ancient monasteries were situated, and broken by ridges of hills, such as the Poldens, the Quantocks and Bleadon. The latter is an extension of the Mendip Hills, a range of limestone outcrops that reach over 320m at their highest point, and provide an upland landscape of rich pasture and mineral resources in the north of the county. The north-eastern limit of Somerset is created by the Avon Valley, upon which the city of Bristol is built. West of the Levels is the highest land mass in the region, Exmoor and the Brendon Hills, their highest point at Dunkery Beacon near the coast (520m).

Wiltshire, and the eastern portion of Somerset bordering it, present a very different landscape to the above, and are characterized by chalk and limestone geology, the majority of which lies at over 100m. The south and east are dominated by the chalk uplands of Salisbury Plain and the Marlborough Downs, broken by the confluence of several river valleys, primarily the Avon, Wylye and Nadder, near Salisbury. In contrast, the north west of Wiltshire and the Bath region of Somerset form the southern edge of the Cotswold Hills, and are well known for the abundance of distinctive oolitic limestone that forms the underlying geology of the area. The third River Avon in the region forms a valley running from north-east to south-west through this area.

Somerset and Wiltshire are counties with few large towns and cities, and the settlement pattern of the region is dominated by the cities of Bristol and Bath in the north, and an accompanying area of relatively dense settlement. Taunton and Bridgwater are the two largest towns in southern Somerset and there are few other settlements of any size, rather a pattern of small towns, villages and scattered hamlets. In Wiltshire, the county town is at Trowbridge and the largest settlement at Swindon. However, both are modern developments and Salisbury and Wilton in the south east formed the historic urban core of the county. Wiltshire was characterized by small towns and boroughs in the Middle Ages (Haslam 1984a: 87), notable amongst them being Marlborough, Chippenham, Malmesbury and Devizes.

The monastic character of the region is broad in its range. Somerset contains one of the most famous monasteries in the country, Glastonbury Abbey, and several other of the religious houses in the region are well known- Malmesbury for its famous writers, Aldhelm and William, as well as its architecture, Athelney for its foundation by King Alfred. Few are known for their standing remains and only Cleeve and Lacock Abbeys can rival the completeness of the monastic remains in counties such as Yorkshire. The existence of modern research on the monastic houses in the region and their estates is similarly varied, but overall, cannot be considered abundant.

On the whole, the property of each monastic house lay primarily within the county in which it was situated, but there were substantial estates belonging to houses in neighbouring counties in Somerset and Wiltshire, just as many of the local houses under study derived a proportion of their income from elsewhere. Too narrow a definition of the region creates an amputated picture of the economy of the houses within it, whereas to include a full examination of all their estates or the full context of estates in the West Country within the economies of 'foreign' houses is far beyond the scope of the thesis. Applying a rigid limit to the extent of study as far as this problem is concerned has not been found productive or possible. It will thus be found that whilst emphasis is firmly placed on monastic estates within the region, they are viewed within the wider monastic economy where relevant.

1.2 Sources

The sources relevant to the study of monastic estates in the region are vast but extremely variable in their coverage, and this thesis is restricted to the consideration of published medieval sources only, of which there are a considerable number. Because the aim of the study has been to consider the distribution and composition of the estates at a broad level, most emphasis has been placed on those sources which provide blanket coverage for the region, namely the two ecclesiastical surveys in 1291 and 1535, as well as Domesday Book. It is recognized that the thesis can only be regarded as selective in its historical approach, and that it lacks the depth and historical detail that would be provided by greater use of monastic chronicles, accounts and cartularies.

Similarly, a wide range of archaeological and topographical sources has been used, and again, the coverage across the region is extremely variable. Many of the monastic houses were the subject of archaeological excavation in the nineteenth and early twentieth century: far fewer have been in recent decades. A considerable body of survey data of local monastic sites has been built up however, which provides invaluable information about the monastic precincts of the region. Considerable use has been made of the nineteenth century tithe maps and accompanying documentation as well. Discussion of the survival of standing buildings and archaeological evidence for individual monastic sites can be found in Chapters 4 and 5, and for monastic farms and estates in Chapter 8. Full discussion of the general historical sources can be found in Chapter 6 and that pertaining to individual houses in the gazetteer.

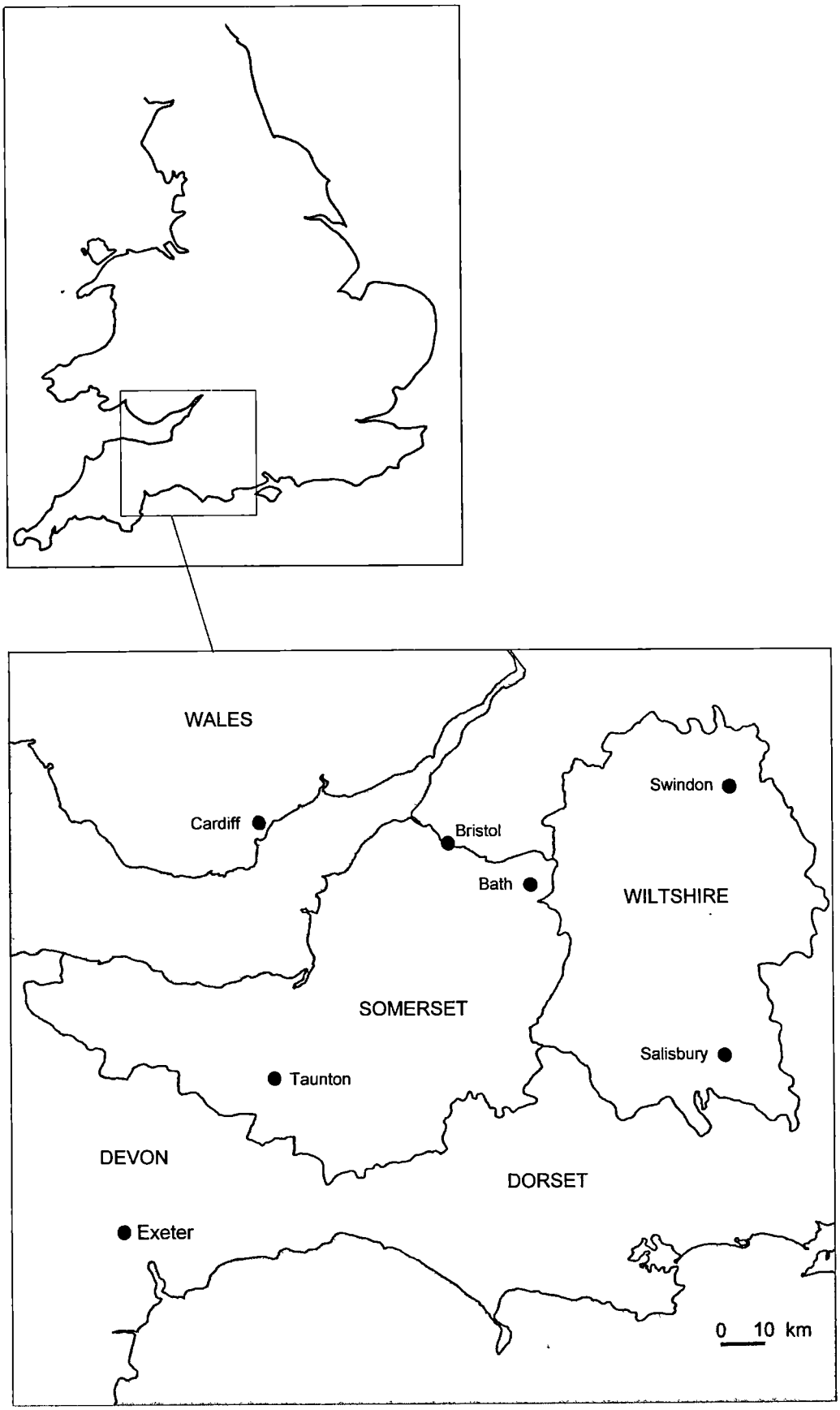

Figure 1.1 Location of Somerset and Wiltshire

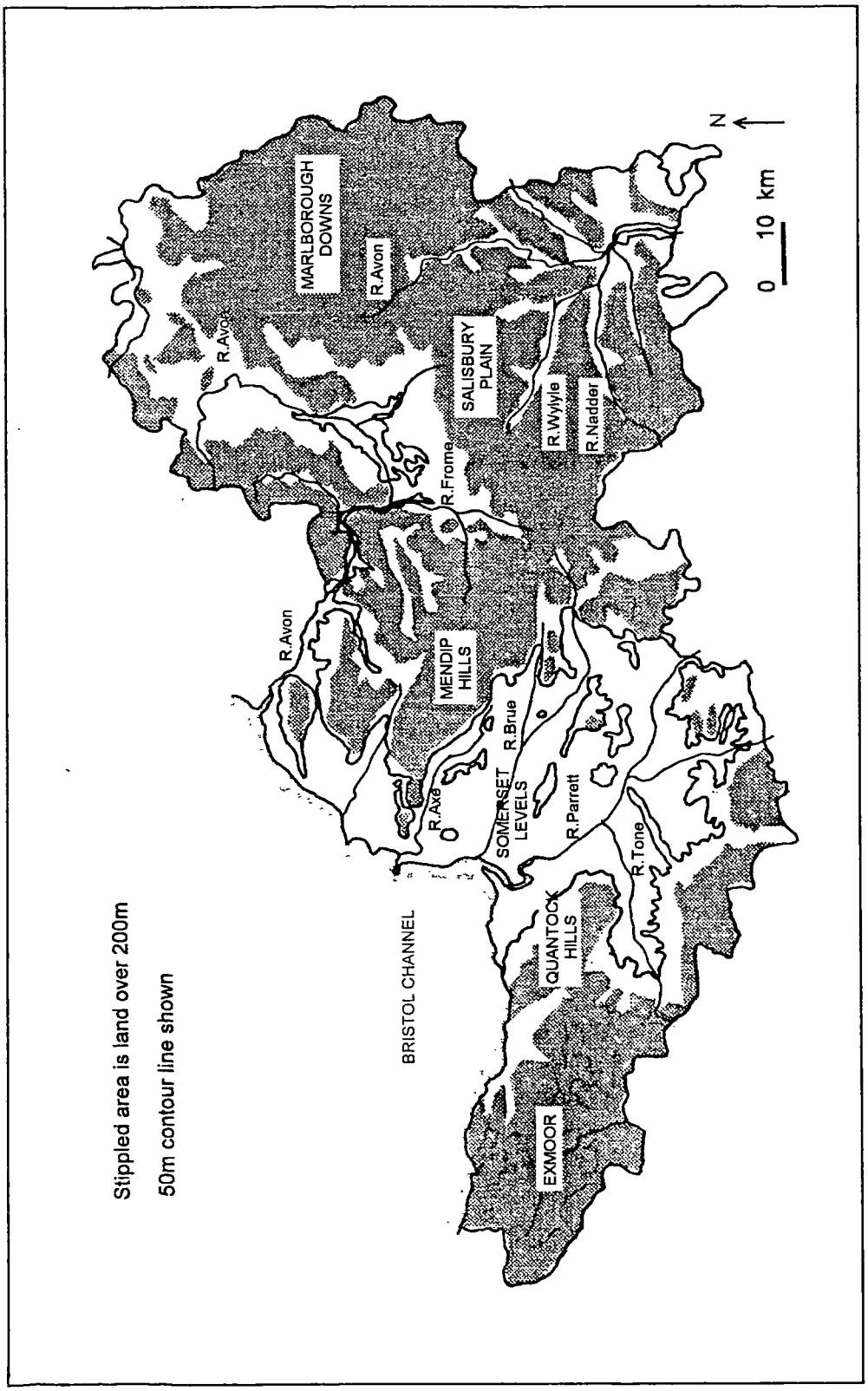

Figure 1.2 The topography of the region

1.3 Chapter synopsis

Chapter 2 examines the evidence for monasticism from the post-Roman period to the Norman Conquest, following the opening premise that it is this period that was fundamental to the character of the monastic landscape of the region. It is however, also characterized by the equivocal nature of the historical and archaeological data. The evidence from the fifth to eleventh centuries is considered, with particular emphasis given to the houses that continued into the later period.

Chapter 3 examines the post-Conquest foundations of the region and their development within a national context. Although broadly reflecting national patterns of foundation, the two counties display several unique characteristics in the number and distribution of the different monastic orders present within the region. Whilst remaining peripheral to some monastic developments of the period, such as the arrival of the Cistercian order, the region was fundamental in others, such as the establishment of the Carthusians in England.

Chapter 4 considers the landscape implications of the development outlined in the previous chapter, and examines the context involved in the siting of monastic houses. Many of the foundations in the region were situated in urban or suburban locations, and were associated with town developments in the twelfth century or later, rather than the 'classic' rural locations traditionally associated with religious houses. A substantial number of the Augustinian houses can be demonstrated to follow the siting of previous religious institutions, whether minsters or hermitages, and the search for seclusion by the new orders is also examined. Moving on from the siting of the houses in general, the evidence for the buildings of the monasteries themselves is discussed, and the existence of claustral and non-claustral complexes considered. Two key themes to the disposition of the buildings are discussed- the existence of north and south cloisters and their size.

Chapter 5 focuses on the evidence for the precinct, the area that surrounded the monastery itself and acted as the core of its estates. It placed the monastery within a discrete enclosure that separated it from the secular world and provided domestic and economic support for the community. The precinct often provides the most

tangible landscape remains of the monastic landscape and this chapter looks at its structure and composition through archaeological and historical sources.

Chapter 6 provides a background to the main documentary sources used in the subsequent discussion of the monastic landscape and economy, namely the Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV 1291, the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* 1535 and the nineteenth century tithe maps[2]. The first source was used as the primary assessment of ecclesiastical wealth for several hundred years and thus occupies a significant place in contemporary perception of the monastic economy. Its reliability has often been questioned and it has been little used in monastic studies, but recent research has allowed reinterpretation of the information it contains to some degree. Similarly, the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* occupies a fundamental place in monastic history and although widely referred to in a general sense, has been greatly under-used as a national survey of a substantial part of the late medieval economy. Finally, the discussion of the nineteenth century tithe maps attempts to treat the use of such a late source for the monastic landscape in a more explicit fashion than previous authors, by addressing the historical context of monastic tithe payment and exemption and the process of commutation.

Chapter 7 presents the evidence for monastic estates, temporal and spiritual, in the region from these sources and discusses their distribution at a broad level. The relative wealth of the individual houses assessed at different dates is discussed initially, and the reliability of their valuations considered. The dominance of the estates belonging to the pre-Conquest foundations in the region emerges strongly from the data. They formed a wide-scale and stable core to the monastic landscape of the region, around which those of the later houses accumulated throughout the Middle Ages. Even at a broad level, a varying character to the composition of the economy of each order is clear, providing an overall hierarchy within the monastic landscape in the size, management and distribution of estates.

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis by examining the monastic economy within the landscape of the region and using various sources to identify its location and extent on the ground. The concept of the grange farm is discussed and the evidence for

[2] A discussion of Domesday Book has not been included because of the huge volume of literature that exists concerning the source and its use.

complexes of farm buildings with associated demesne farming presented. The study of the nineteenth century tithe data suggests that its application to the identification of monastic estates may be far more wide-ranging than previously anticipated, and its potential for reconstructing their composition is discussed.

1.4 Notes on the appendices and referencing

Appendix 1 provides tables of data referred to in the text by a table reference and page number. Appendix 2 consists of a gazetteer of monastic houses in the region: brief notes about the house where relevant and a bibliography of work about it. The basis of the study of monastic estates has been the entry into, and processing of, the data from these sources using a computerized database and accompanying spreadsheet software (Microsoft Access and Excel), and a printout from this of the monastic estates owned by the house is included in Appendix 3 for reference. Appendix 4 contains a list of sites in the region suggested for future work that may represent the remains of monastic granges.

The *Taxatio* of 1291 and *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535 are repeatedly referred to in the study. Specific page references are not given in the text: instead full references to the relevant entries for each monastic house can be found in Appendix 2. All references to Domesday Book are given in square brackets and refer to the numbered section in the relevant country volume of the Phillimore edition of the survey.

All measurements throughout the text are given in metric, unless the reference is taken directly from a historic source, in which case the original units are quoted. Conversion of units as follows:

1 acre = hectares

2. FOUNDATION: THE PRE-CONQUEST PERIOD

2.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the lengthy period from the earliest monastic foundations in the region until the Norman Conquest. It thus has a far more precise end than beginning, because evidence for the development and nature of early religious life in the region is sparse and often equivocal. The first reliably documented monasteries in Somerset and Wiltshire belong to the reign of King Ine of the West Saxons in the late seventh century and from this point, an increasing body of evidence concerning the life and economy of the monastic communities of the region can be discussed. However, the extent and nature of monasticism in the region prior to the Saxon period is a matter of considerable debate, as is the potential continuity or otherwise between pre-existing British structures and institutions and the Latin Christianity of St Augustine and his contemporaries.

The nature of the evidence for the earliest period raises profound difficulties in interpretation, resting as it does on a slim foundation of archaeological and historical data, both of which are heavily influenced by the pattern and traditions of later religious life. The debate about the nature of religious life in the west before the late Saxon period is far beyond the scope of this thesis. Thus, only themes that are relevant to the overall development of the monastic landscape of the region have been targeted, and wider questions about the origins and development of religious life have not been addressed. There is inevitably a bias towards those houses which successfully 'navigated' the pre-Conquest period and formed the skeleton of monastic life in Somerset and Wiltshire throughout the Middle Ages, but this is felt to be justified within the context of the thesis as a whole.

2.2 British monasticism and the Saxon historical tradition

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that western Britain was a predominantly, if not entirely, Christian area in the post-Roman period (Hase 1994: 49). Archaeological material from sites in Somerset, Gloucestershire and Dorset can demonstrate the transition from pagan to Christian worship, as well as some continuity in use of Roman Christian burial grounds and churches into the sub-Roman period (e.g. Rodwell 1982). Pearce (1978) has argued for a long-lived and stable Christian kingdom that occupied the territory of Dumnonia in the south west, throughout the post-Roman centuries. There is little suggestion that this was a monastic Christianity however, the emphasis being on secular, rural churches.

The nature and existence of monasticism in the early post-Roman period is a matter of considerable debate. The recognition of the earliest monastic sites rests on the interpretation of archaeological and topographical material, as well as historical sources (Edwards & Lane 1992: 3), and our understanding of what constituted a monastery in this period is extremely dependent on later historical traditions (Davies 1982:141). The literary traditions of later religious institutions preserve details about their roots, and without this, the recognition of early sites as intrinsically monastic rather than secular is difficult, although, even with literary evidence, the identification of modern locations can be problematic (Olson 1989: 2). However, it seems likely that monasticism of some sort existed in Britain in the sixth century, bringing a new dimension and vigour to Christianity as it moved eastwards (Olson 1989: 2)[1].

Somerset and Wiltshire lay in a critical position with respect to the eastward spread of monasticism, and also the westward spread of Saxon culture. The historical record of colonization by the West Saxons must be treated with caution, but the broad progress of Saxon culture westwards can be reinforced by archaeological evidence. Southern Wiltshire and Hampshire were settled by the end of the fifth century and shortly afterwards became part of the West Saxon kingdom, which

[1] Although Davies (1992: 12) rejects the notion of a 'Celtic Church' as an institutional structure in this early period, both Olson (1989) and Davies (1982) studying the south west and Wales respectively, take a critical and reserved approach to the problems inherent in defining and recognising sites as monastic in the early period, from the range of sources available.

included the north of the county by the end of the sixth century (Hase 1994: 51). Little Saxon settlement in Dorset and Somerset can be identified archaeologically before the seventh century (Eagles 1994), and it was probably not until the middle of the century that the majority of the region was under West Saxon control (ibid.). The area around the Roman town of Bath was under Mercian control from the early seventh century, and the north of Somerset can probably be seen as something of a frontier zone in the ensuing period (Prosser 1995: 86).

This gradual settlement has several implications for the development of monasticism in the region. Firstly, the much earlier influx of Saxon settlers in Somerset and Wiltshire compared to areas further west means that there is no surviving historical tradition of early British monasticism similar to that which exists for Cornwall or Wales, where these institutions continued far longer. Thus, deciphering whether the Saxon monastic tradition obscures the presence or absence of an earlier monastic tradition is problematic. The initial Saxon settlers in Wiltshire would have been pagan, whereas by the mid-seventh century, the West Saxon kingdom had been officially converted, and the settlers in the western part of the region should thus have been Christian arrivals in a Christian region. To what degree can we suggest monasticism in the region before their arrival? Was Saxon society confronted with a 'resident church of some vigour' (Hase 1994: 51)? Were there flourishing monastic houses and to what degree were they incorporated into the new Roman model of Christianity if they did exist?

The interpretation of continuity between British and Saxon society is very much influenced by the traditions and structure of the latter for the region. As Blair has indicated, placing emphasis on the attempt to isolate the division between the two may be an unproductive use of the evidence, with greater continuity in the physical evidence than the terminology suggests (1992: 226). Here, it is primarily the evidence for the origins of the earliest substantiated monasteries of the late seventh century and their landscape context that is investigated, to establish a picture of their emerging character, and assess their relationship, where the evidence allows, with the earlier period.

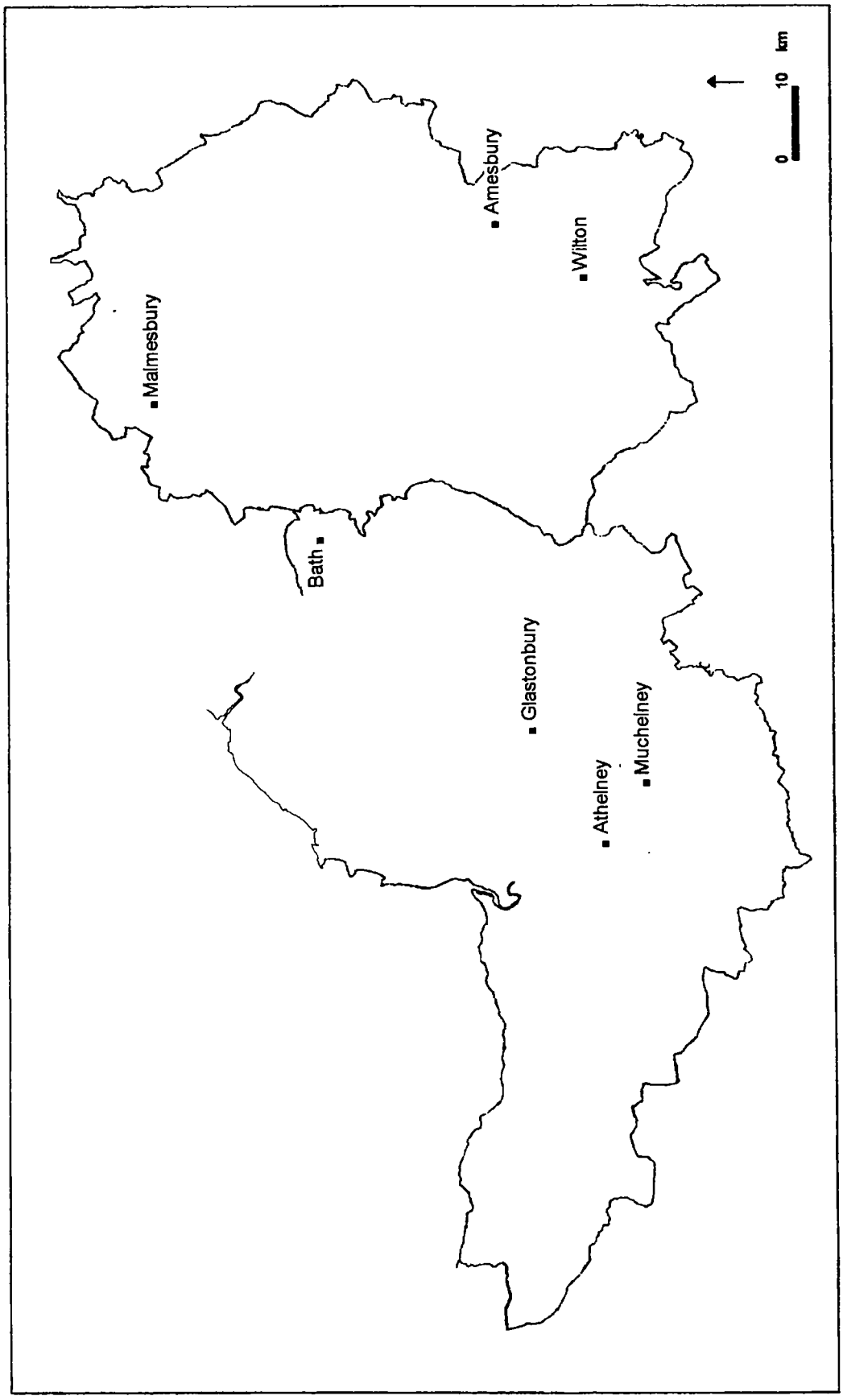

Figure 2.1 Location of major monasteries discussed in this chapter

2.3 Somerset and Wiltshire before the late seventh century

2.3.1 Glastonbury: the abbey and tor

Of all the monasteries in the region, Glastonbury (Figure 2.1) has received the most speculation about its earliest roots and has legends that stretch back furthest into the post-Roman period. The foundation at Glastonbury has been claimed to date to the fifth century, placing it firmly within the British monastic tradition of Wales and the west. However, the existence of contemporary evidence to support these claims is absent almost entirely. As Abrams points out in her landmark study *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and Endowment*, 'scrutiny of the written sources, however, reveals no more evidence to support this than has been so far offered by the excavated remains' (1996: 5), which are famed for their inconclusive nature.

Much of Glastonbury's identification as an early monastery rests on legends and traditions within the historical texts generated by the community in the later Saxon and medieval period. The most famous association was with St Patrick, the enigmatic fifth-century cleric, and Glastonbury has been reputed as his burial place, although this tradition cannot be traced earlier than the tenth century[1]. Similarly, the cult of St Bridget, who it was claimed visited Glastonbury *c.*500 AD and left several possessions there, was centred on a chapel at Beckery on the western side of the town at Glastonbury (Figure 2.2). However, the cult appears to have been a late invention, based partially on a misinterpretation of the place name (Rahtz 1993: 119). Historical references to the saint cannot be traced further back than the twelfth century, and archaeological evidence at Beckery to the late Saxon period (Rahtz & Hirst 1974: 7).

It is possible that all these accounts embody genuine early traditions about the monastery at Glastonbury. Religious traffic across the Irish sea is suggested at an early date by hagiography in the west and there is one early Irish text, the *Glossary of Cormac mac Cuilennain*, which may refer to the existence of a monastic site at Glastonbury, as a result of Irish missionary activity (Olson 1989: 31). It was written

before the early tenth century, but refers to past monastic settlement (ibid.). However, the existence of an Irish influence need not necessarily imply British monastic or early roots. The juxtaposition of Irish and Saxon monasticism meant that the former, with its implication of ancient roots and a strong spiritual tradition, was still a current force in English religious life in the later period. Missionaries from the Irish church were known in the West Country and Wales, and Dunstan, the monastic reformer, is recorded as using Irish texts to study from at Glastonbury in the tenth century (Rahtz 1993: 48). None of the accounts can be demonstrated to stem from before the late Saxon, early post-Conquest period, and partially at least reflect the popularity of Irish culture at this date. The resurgence of such legends at Glastonbury after a devastating fire in the late twelfth century amply demonstrates this[2].

In physical terms, there is nothing to suggest an establishment on the site of the later abbey before the early eighth century. The excavation of a bank and ditch around the monastery at the site was considered by its excavator to be the *vallum monasterii* of a British phase of occupation (Radford 1981: 114). Similarly, the literary tradition of the *vetusta ecclesia* at the site, an ancient church that pre-dated King Ine's early eighth-century one, has also been interpreted as the focus of a Celtic monastery (Rahtz 1993: 72). However, although the absence of dating material in either the fill or structure of the ditch does suggest that it was the earliest phase of occupation on the site, there is no evidence that either feature pre-dates the earliest phase of Saxon occupation. The *vallum monasterii* is a recognizable feature of many early religious sites outside as well as within the Celtic tradition, such as Northumbrian monasteries like Jarrow (Cramp 1969) and Whitby (Clark 1998). It seems likely that the monastery laid out at the medieval abbey site represented a new venture in the Saxon period.

Instead, evidence for fifth to seventh century occupation in the area has come from the hill-top of Glastonbury Tor, at the foot of which the later medieval abbey and town lie (Figure 2.2). Later activity on the site has rendered the excavated evidence partial and inconclusive, but timber structures accompanied by hearths and pits, and associated with two north-south burials have been found, as well as fragments of

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[1] See Dumville (1993) for recent essays on the life of St Patrick.
[2] Rahtz (1993) discusses a number of the Glastonbury legends and their origins.

imported sixth-century Mediterranean amphora, a bronze sculpture of a human head, and evidence for metal working (Rahtz 1971).

Glastonbury Tor thus falls into a group of high status post-Roman sites in the south west, characterized by finds of imported pottery, craft activity, burial and also a common pattern in the topography and situation of the sites, which are commonly found in association with hill-top or promontory locations (Dark 1994). Within Somerset (Figure 2.3), there are similar excavated examples at South Cadbury (Alcock 1995), Cannington (Rahtz, Hirst & Wright 2000) and Congresbury (Rahtz et al 1992). Each location is a similar hillfort site, with defensive banking and ditching, imported ceramics of fifth to seventh century date, and some burial evidence. Banwell, a hill-top site near Congresbury, probably falls into the same category but is unexcavated.

The existence of post-Roman occupation at these sites is clear, the problem is their interpretation[3]. Rahtz (1971: 21) initially favoured a secular interpretation for the occupation at Glastonbury Tor, and saw it as a defended strategic point of social prominence, similar to the secular interpretation favoured for Tintagel (Thomas 1993). His most recent publication, however, (Rahtz 1993: 59) has reopened the monastic question and the evidence is certainly compatible with an eremitic religious site[4], similar to those found in Wales (Edwards and Lane 1992). However, as in many of the cases in the south west, the interpretation of the site as monastic rather than secular rests on its association with later religious traditions. At Glastonbury, the possible religious nature of the earliest settlement on the tor is reinforced by later activity there. A wheel-headed cross of eighth-century date, combined with timber post structures and small cells on the tor itself has been interpreted as an early Saxon hermitage (Rahtz 1971: 32), and this was superseded by a church in the post-Conquest period.

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[3] See Dark (1994) for discussion of problems of interpretation for these sites generally. Olson provides a summary of evidence at these sites across the south west (1989) and Davies (1982: 149-157) for the nature of possible early monastic sites in Wales.

[4] There is no evidence from this early phase to indicate whether the occupation was Christian or pagan. There are several other potentially similar sites in the area, such as Brean Down, where a possible post-Roman Christian cemetery was found in a promontory situation (Bell 1990: 80).

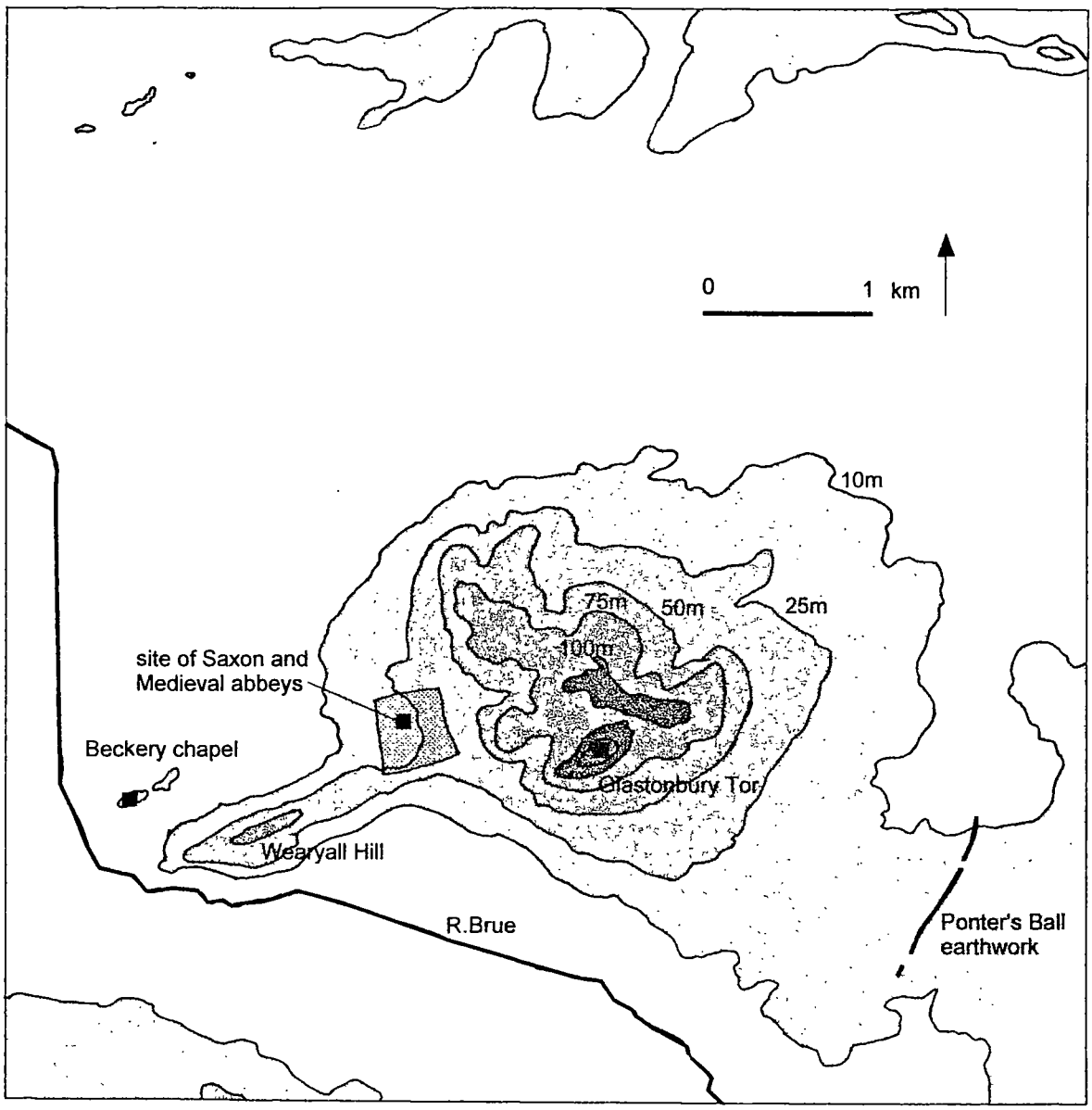

Figure 2.2 Location of the abbey and tor at Glastonbury

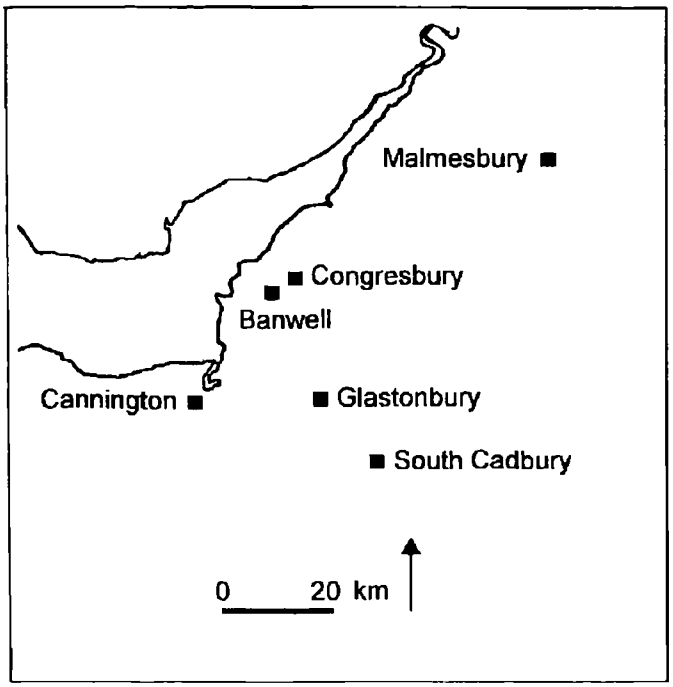

Figure 2.3 Sites of high status fifth to seventh century occupation in Somerset mentioned in the text

A pattern emerges across the region where high status post-Roman occupation sites such as the tor are found in a close topographical relationship with a later religious settlement, located on lower-lying ground nearby. At Congresbury, the post-Roman hill-top site and nearby cemetery of Henley Wood are linked to later historical traditions that associate them with the eponymous St Congar and King Ine and the foundation of a minster in the late seventh century (Keynes & Lapidge 1983: 264), probably at the foot of the hill in the present village[5]. Both it and nearby Banwell display similar characteristics. Both were mentioned in Alfred's will as monasteries in the ninth century (ibid.: 97), and high status Saxon funerary and ecclesiastical

[5] The medieval parish church at Congresbury sits at the foot of the hillfort within a rectangular churchyard that recalls the topographic relationship between the monastery and tor at Glastonbury. Investigation in the churchyard might prove fruitful in the search for the minster at Congresbury.

sculpture has been located at both sites in settlements adjacent to the hillfort. At Cannington, the excavation of part of a large cemetery in the 1960s revealed a mixed Christian burial ground of fourth to eighth century date adjacent to the hillfort (Rahtz, Hirst & Wright 2000).

These sites may well represent a Christian presence on hill-top sites, replaced in the Saxon period by religious institutions on more accessible sites that retained some topographical continuity. However key questions remain for this early period of religious activity. The archaeological evidence for post-Roman occupation, whilst not substantial, suggests considerable high status activity, characterized by fairly large numbers of burials, well-crafted artefacts and the reuse of important defended, secular foci (Dark 1994). The interpretation of these sites as monastic in the western British eremitical tradition is not entirely convincing when stripped of later legends and traditions- at sites such as South Cadbury and Tintagel without these traditions, a secular interpretation is more favoured. At Glastonbury Tor, a fifth to seventh century focus of high status activity, perhaps secular and religious, may have attracted or been replaced by a seventh century Saxon foundation.

2.3.2 Flat Holm and Steep Holm

Fragmentary historical and archaeological evidence suggests that the island of Flat Holm, in the Severn estuary, may have a good claim to a monastic or eremitic site of British tradition from a very early date. The sixth century cleric and author Gildas does not mention the island himself, but an eleventh-twelfth century source, the *Life of St Cadog*, describes how both ecclesiastics served God on the island *Echni*, which has been identified with Flat Holm (Emmanuel 1951)[6]. This suggests a religious presence on the island, certainly with eremitical overtones, but possibly cenobitic too. Students are mentioned, and so is the manufacture of a mass book, both of which imply a scholarly community of some sort. A fragment of an incised memorial cross of seventh-ninth century date has been discovered on the island (Rendell 1981: 5),

[6] The *Life of St Cadog* is one of the earliest Welsh *vitae*, and was composed at the saint's own monastery, Llancarfan, and is considered to be a reliable source: see Emmanuel (1951) for a full discussion. See Davies (1982: 141) for reservations about the use of hagiography for the identification of early monastic sites.

which implies an early Christian, if not necessarily monastic, presence (Olson 1989).

Flat Holm was one of several islands in the Bristol Channel that provided strategic points for early seafaring, and there are varied traditions of the islands playing a role in secular, ecclesiastical and funerary traffic throughout the later pre-Conquest period (Rendell 1981). There are monastic traditions at both Caldey and Lundy Islands as well as Flat Holm (Thomas 1994: 168), and island situations were common for many early religious sites across Britain, such as Skellig Michael (Kerry) or Iona (Strathclyde). Similarly, the neighbouring island of Steep Holm was the site of an Augustinian priory in the later medieval period, and archaeological investigation has revealed evidence of occupation dating from before the Roman period (Rendell 1981), so an early religious site here must also be considered possible.

2.4 Ine, Aldhelm and Osric: the seventh century

The arrival of St Augustine and his establishment of a church at Canterbury in 597 was the formal origin of Latin Christianity and monasticism in Britain. This model of Christianity rested on the establishment of an organized system of regional ecclesiastical units controlled by bishops, and large *parochiae*, which were served by a mother church or minster. This system probably began at a very early date, and can be identified before the eighth century, particularly in the east of the country (Blair 1992). The minsters were characterized by a community of religious personnel to serve the church, and usually an endowment of land to support the community, and the distinction between minster and monastery was probably not made at this date, as indeed the common origin of the name indicates. The development of later monastic houses must be considered in this context. In this section, it is primarily those institutions that are recognized as regular monasteries in the late Saxon period that are considered, in the interests of brevity, but the fact that this is only a partial approach to the early Saxon religious communities of the region is recognized.

It is not until the reign of King Ine (688-725) of the West Saxons, a vigorous monastic patron and benefactor, and St Aldhelm (675-709), church builder, holy man and abbot of Malmesbury, that this Christian and monastic tradition emerges reliably in the documentary record of the West Country. However, the second half of the

seventh century as a whole must be regarded as a critical period of religious foundation, and there are several establishments which may have been founded before firm documentary evidence suggests.

2.4.1 Bath

In 676 AD, Osric of the *Hwicce* granted land near Bath for the erection of a religious house (Hunt 1893: i, 7), in what appears to be its foundation charter[7]. By this date, Bath was firmly under Mercian control, the town and its hinterland being, perhaps symbolically rather than defensively, separated from the West Saxon kingdom by the monumental earthwork of the West Wansdyke (Prosser 1995: 85). The extent to which Bath was a functioning administrative settlement in the late seventh century is not certain, but its position with respect to the Mercian and West Saxon territorial struggles suggests it still exerted influence in the surrounding area, and was an important factor in shifting political control (ibid.). The establishment of a monastery in association with the Roman town placed it in a critical political frontier zone and also at the heart of one of the most powerful historic central places within the region. In addition, the grant accompanying the foundation of 100 *mansae* around the city (Hunt 1893: i, 7) placed a large swathe of land on the frontier zone under religious control, at a period when the West Saxons were increasingly powerful locally. The foundation of a community at Bath can thus be seen as a political as well as pious act[8].

The exact nature and location of this community is not entirely clear[9]. The initial grant was addressed to an abbess (ibid.), clearly indicating a female element to the community, whereas a further eighth-century confirmation charter records only male religious at the monastery (Hunt 1893: i, 19), and the institution continued as such until the Dissolution. The large size and similarity of the monastic estate recorded in each case renders it unlikely that the charters refer to two separate institutions[10], suggesting that the male community superseded either a female or double

[7] See Manco (1993: 102) for discussion about the authenticity of the charter.
[8] See discussion about Malmesbury, below.
[9] See Cunliffe (1984: 347-349); Sims-Williams (1974); Gilchrist (1994: 65) and Manco (1993: 75-76) for fuller debate about the charter, the community and its location.

community. Recent work suggests that double communities played a crucial role in the minster system and pastoral care, as well as the monastic (Thacker 1992: 143) and that double establishments were a common expression of monastic life in the seventh to ninth centuries (Gilchrist 1994: 25). Therefore, it seems likely that the initial foundation at Bath may have been a double house for both men and women.

If Bath was initially founded as a double house, it fits a pattern of other such early communities, later refounded as male houses, such as Repton or Gloucester Abbey (Gilchrist 1994: 137). In terms of regional distribution, the known double houses do appear to be more common across Mercia and the midlands rather than Wessex (Figure 2.4), and Bath, falling under Mercian control, can be proposed to share some characteristics with the midland houses in this respect.

There is no excavated evidence for the earliest monastery at Bath, and its location is a matter of debate[11]. Without excavated evidence, the issue of whether it lay within the town walls on the site of the later priory, or outside, cannot be solved definitively. If it was located on the site of the later priory, the geographical proximity between the site of the early monastery and the focus of the Roman complex beneath implies the deliberate reuse of an important location.

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[10] Manco (1993: 76) points out how unlikely it is that two such large monastic estates could co-exist in the immediate Bath area.

[11] See footnote 9. Cunliffe (1984: 349) favours a location inside the walls, whilst Gilchrist (1993: 65) argues for the possibility of a site elsewhere, on the basis of continental parallels.

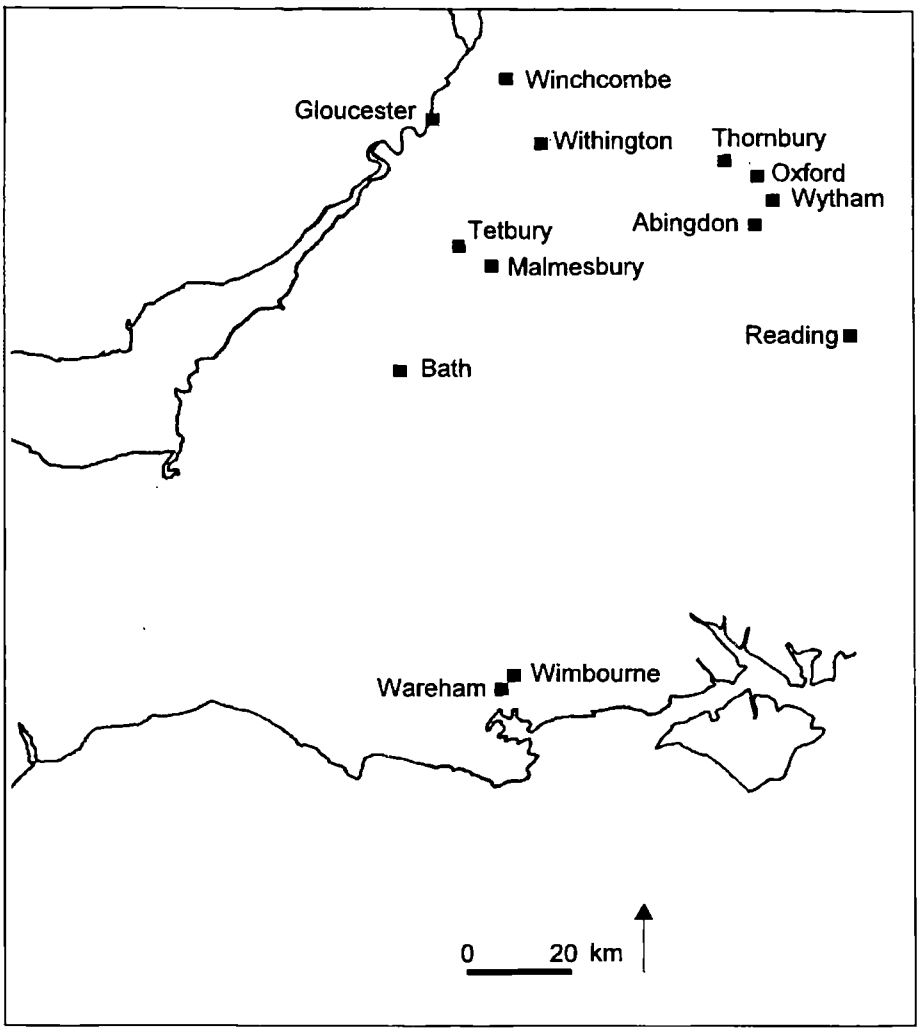

Figure 2.4 Possible seventh-eighth century double houses (after Gilchrist 1994)

2.4.2 Malmesbury

The early history of Malmesbury Abbey is fraught with uncertainty: the archaeological and documentary sources can be considered on a par with Glastonbury Abbey in their complexity, but they have not been subjected to a similar level of modern research[12]. Knowledge of the abbey's early history is bound up with the life of its late seventh-century abbot, Aldhelm, and its most famous inhabitant, William of Malmesbury, who wrote detailed histories of the monastery in the eleventh century. Aldhelm himself left a considerable body of both prose and poetry (Lapidge & Herren 1979), and although very little of this throws direct light on the developmental narrative of the abbey itself, his writings have been heavily relied upon to support arguments about his own background and that of the monastery. Similarly, interpretation of the fragmentary archaeological evidence and surrounding estates have been greatly influenced by William of Malmesbury's tantalising but ambiguous account of the foundation of the abbey. Like Glastonbury, the belief in a British or Irish predecessor to the monastery at Malmesbury is largely a matter of legend rather than fact.

The establishment of the monastery was credited to Máeldub, an Irish monk and hermit, who set up a scholarly community in the mid-seventh century (Watkin 1956: 210). Neither the existence of Máeldub or an Irish holy man, who has been inferred from Aldhelm's letters, as his teacher at the monastery, can be demonstrated with confidence (Lapidge & Herren 1979: 6). Indeed, Máeldub may represent a conflation of the place name itself, combined with an imaginative reading of Bede's references to the town (Sherley-Price 1968: 304)[13]. However, William of Malmesbury's account is distinguished by its placement of the foundation within the setting of a British political landscape, one that has been considered increasingly plausible in recent years (Haslam 1984a: 111). William described Máeldub's foundation as located at a

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[12] A modern critical study of the early sources pertaining to the abbey, similar to Abrams's (1996) volume on Glastonbury, or even a translated edition of its cartulary, would be an invaluable addition to local and national monastic research.

[13] For a full critical discussion of the earliest sources concerning Aldhelm and an Irish foundation at Malmesbury, see Lapidge & Herren (1979: 6, 181). See Watkin (1956) for later medieval sources, which add more detail and flesh to the story, but cannot be supported by early evidence: the VCH references and commentary on the texts are very dated.

defended British stronghold, which was situated near an important British royal palace.

The later town and abbey of Malmesbury occupy a promontory site that was probably a hillfort in the Iron Age (Haslam 1984a: 111), and may have retained a similar function in the Roman and sub-Roman periods as a defended centre, attested by fragmentary archaeological finds within the town (SMR) and parallels with other sites such as those discussed above. The promontory has thus been identified as William's stronghold, with the royal palace nearby commonly identified with Brokenborough, later the subject of a substantial land grant to the abbey (Brewer 1879) (Figure 2.5). By the mid-seventh century, northern Wiltshire was well within the auspices of the West Saxon kingdom, and a foundation at this date must be viewed within a Saxon context, whatever the possible cultural affinities of the legendary Máeldub.

However, like Bath, the foundation did take place within an important earlier political centre, and was clearly sited with respect to earlier settlement patterns. Again, like Bath, it was granted a large and compact block of land in the liminal zone between the territories of the West Saxons and the *Hwicce*. This suggests that the religious estates were acting as a 'buffer-zone' between the two kingdoms and the monastic houses represented foci of royal patronage in a critical part of the political landscape. Identifying the extent of this land grant and the siting of the monastery has proved to be a complex problem in landscape studies, resting heavily as it does on William of Malmesbury's account and fragmentary archaeological evidence, as well as the organization of later land endowments[14].

The location of the early, and indeed later Saxon, monastery has not been established. William of Malmesbury's account describes an accumulation of four main Saxon monastic churches or chapels, the descriptions of which echo the multiple churches excavated within the precinct at Glastonbury (see below). There was a very early *parva basilica*, reputedly erected by Máeldub, which was superseded by Aldhelm's new church of SS Saviour, Peter and Paul (Hamilton 1870: 345). This remained the principal monastic church until the tenth century (ibid.:386).

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[14] This problem is addressed briefly below, but see also Hinchliffe and Barker (1986), Barker (1984), Grundy (1920) and Haslam (1984) for previous research.

Aldhelm built a further two churches or chapels close together in the community, dedicated to St Mary and St Michael (ibid.:361). At his death, Aldhelm's body was buried in St Michael's (ibid.:385), and at some point after this, the monks moved to St Mary's church (ibid.:386). Brakspear identified the site of the Norman monastic church, dedicated to St Mary, with its Saxon predecessor and proposed that the remains of the parish church of St Paul on the southern limit of the precinct represented the site of the initial church (Brakspear 1913: 399), placing the developing Saxon monastery within the later monastic precinct (Figure 2.5).

The discovery of a major early medieval site at Cowage Farm, three km away from Malmesbury itself on a low-lying riverside site, has led to speculation that this was the royal and monastic site that represented the earliest religious foundation, which later moved within the town (Hinchliffe 1986: 253). Geophysical survey and excavation revealed a series of timber buildings and structures, including one which appears east-west aligned with a semi-circular apse, suggesting an ecclesiastical interpretation. By comparison with similar sites, such as Yeavering (Hope-Taylor 1977) or Cowdery's Down (Millett 1983), the site has been suggested as a royal and ecclesiastical complex, dating to as early as the seventh century.

William of Malmesbury's account is too ambiguous to confirm or refute this possibility. The identification of an early site for Malmesbury Abbey at Cowage Farm does provide strong topographic parallels with the majority of Wessex monastic sites and certainly provides the archaeological evidence missing from the promontory site itself. However, this model requires a major translation by the community at some point. Comparison between the spacious riverside site at Cowage Farm and the cramped promontory situation of the later abbey raises serious questions about the reason for such a translation.

In its ultimate location on the promontory itself, the monastery at Malmesbury is unusual within the pattern of religious foundation in Wessex, being located within a hill-top defended centre, rather than near to it. Shaftesbury Abbey (Dorset) is perhaps its only parallel, both burh and monastery being founded within a similar promontory site (Penn 1980: 84)[15]. If a seventh or eighth century date for the

[15] Also see below concerning Alfred's foundation at Athelney; monastery and burh were geographically separate there.

foundation of Shaftesbury is accepted, it provides a close parallel in its topographical situation and the existence of a British element in its earliest phase[16].

Furthermore, it might be proposed that this model reflects the foundation pattern of minsters to the north of the region. If the establishment of the seventh-century monastery was initially on the promontory in the area of the later abbey, it would place the foundation entirely within the context of whatever settlement existed at the hilltop at this period, and would suggest that the importance of the site as a strategic centre was a prominent factor. According to William, the monastery was founded outside a defended settlement, although the degree to which this was functioning as such at this date is unclear. Malmesbury might then be seen in a similar light to the establishment of minsters at Bath or Gloucester, both sites where the seventh-century establishment was founded within the limits of a Roman town of some importance. It may also be worth noting that the foundation at Malmesbury has been suggested as an early double house[17]. Although the historical sources for this are late, presumably they reflected current traditions, and the existence of a double house is uncertain but possible. This would reinforce the identification of Malmesbury as an early monastic site similar in foundation circumstances to the group of houses to the north of the region, like Bath, Gloucester Abbey or Repton.

In summary, the early location of the abbey cannot be resolved by the late documentary evidence and in the absence of further archaeological remains from Malmesbury itself. Much of the interpretation of the monastic foundation rests on the development of the town itself, about which evidence is sparse. The town is generally considered to have been stimulated by the abbey in this early period (Haslam 1984a: 115), but if the abbey was initially founded at Cowage Farm, this raises serious questions about the development of the town, and indeed the reason

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[16] Two charters in the Shaftesbury cartulary have been interpreted as grants to the establishment at this date, under a British abbot (Keen 1984: 213). However, the identification must remain uncertain. In addition, there is, as at Malmesbury, no archaeological evidence for the site of the earliest monastic establishment.

[17] Gilchrist uses Bede as a source for the double house at Malmesbury (1994: 28), although he does not refer to the status of the community (Sherley-Price 1968: 304). The tradition is based primarily on the lengthy description of Malmesbury by the antiquarian Leland. He repeats a tradition of two nunneries in the settlement, one near the later medieval abbey, the other outside the town (Chandler 1993: 489). This information appears to be taken from the *Eulogium Historiarum*, a fourteenth century history of the abbey (Watkin 1956: 210), and there is no known earlier source for it.

and date of the move to the promontory by the abbey. The possible continuity with an earlier defended settlement that predated the monastery is also unclear, and understanding the overall development of Malmesbury as a central place within the landscape may be the most productive approach to the foundation of the monastery.

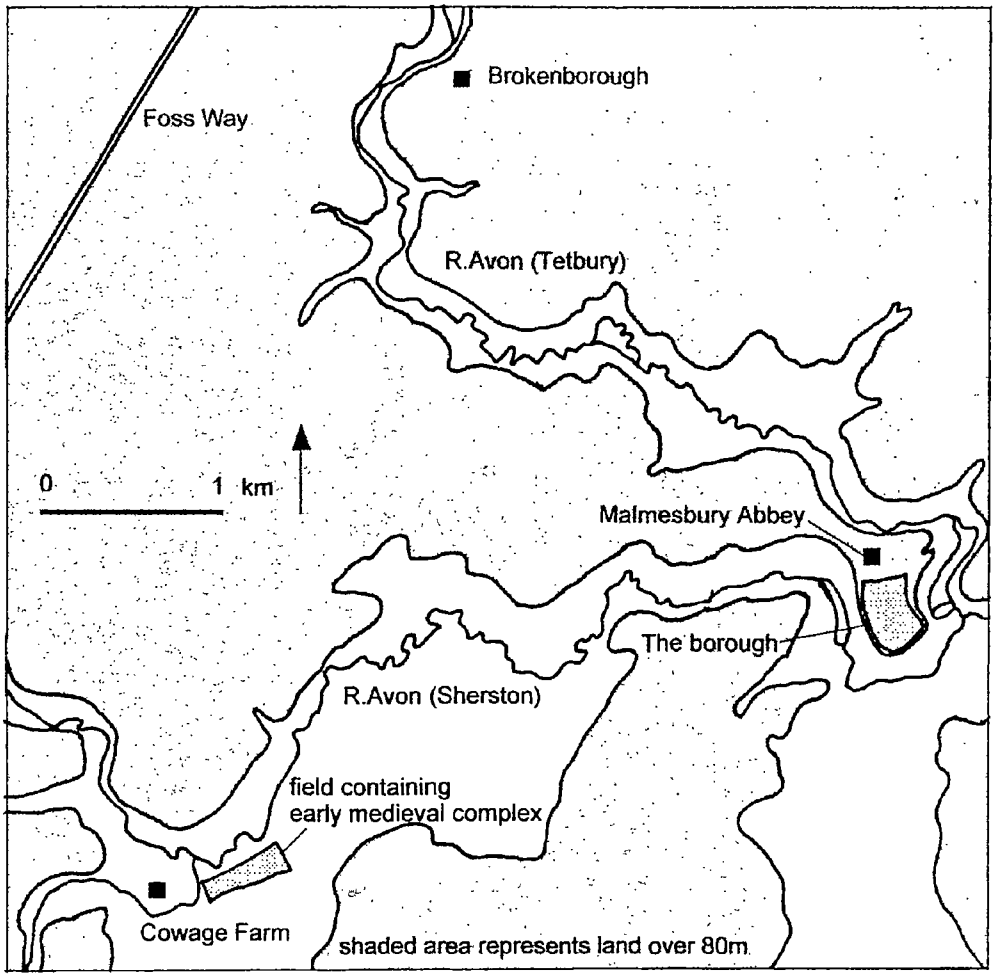

Figure 2.5 The location of Malmesbury Abbey

2.4.3 Glastonbury

Like Malmesbury, at Glastonbury specific historical personalities and circumstances can first be attributed to the late seventh century, the first recorded endowment being credited to King Cenwealh of the West Saxons (642-672) (Abrams 1996: 6). However, no foundation charter exists, and it seems likely that the community came into existence at an earlier date, perhaps before charter writing became a common practice (ibid.). Most importantly, this early documentary evidence is supported by archaeological remains at the site. Indeed, almost the entire bulk of the archaeological evidence for the physical location and appearance of the early monasteries in the region is derived from the excavations carried out at Glastonbury. Unfortunately, given the critical role of the archaeological evidence from the site, the quality of its excavation and recording is far less exemplary than could be hoped and its interpretation must be regarded as tentative[18].

The earliest structure excavated on the site of the medieval abbey is a church dated to the early eighth century and associated with the documented work of King Ine (Radford 1981: 116). The evidence was heavily damaged by later foundations, but has been optimistically interpreted as the central portion of the church, possibly with porticus on each side (ibid.: 117). This church was substantially enlarged, with further side chapels and a western atrium later in the eighth or ninth centuries.

Documentary evidence suggests that this church was not the first on the site, and the location of the *vetusta ecclesia* was noted by several early authors, including William of Malmesbury, and it was regarded as ancient by comparison with the church built by King Ine (Rahtz 1993: 72). It lay in the position of the later Lady chapel, and thus Ine's church created an axial linear arrangement with respect to it, which was extended in the tenth century by the addition of the church of St John the Baptist to the west (ibid.). As discussed above, a British interpretation for both the

[18] Glastonbury was first excavated in 1904 by St John Hope (1904), and has been subject to more than thirty subsequent seasons of excavation, primarily by Bond (e.g.1908), Peers, Clapham and Horne (e.g. 1931) and Radford (1981). Not all of these are adequately published. Rahtz (1993: 66-100), Radford (1981) and Aston & Leech (1977: 57) provide useful summaries, but a detailed modern synthesis of the archaeological evidence to match Abrams' (1996) discussion of the documentary is greatly needed.

vetusta ecclesia and the bank and ditch excavated around the site is unsupported, and they can be considered the earliest Saxon phase of development. The existence of several churches and their positioning along a central axis is a significant feature of Saxon monastic and minster sites, and is most famously present at Augustine's own foundation at Canterbury, where the churches of SS Gregory, Pancras and Mary were aligned on an east west axis (Gem 1997a).

No domestic buildings of this date have been discovered to accompany this church, but evidence from the tor has been interpreted as an eighth-century hermitage. This consisted of part of a wheel-headed cross, combined with structural evidence for timber buildings, a hearth and possible monastic cells (Rahtz 1971: 32). The evidence on the tor is reflected in excavated material from another nearby island, Beckery, which has provided evidence for a chapel and burials, as well as timber structures at a similar date (Rahtz & Hirst 1977: 7). The existence of a series of such hermitages on islands across the levels, particularly Andersey (Nyland) and Martinsey (Marchey Farm), has been proposed by the excavator, which is supported by the later dependency of chapels at each of these sites on the abbey itself.

2.4.4 Muchelney

The cartulary for Muchelney Abbey contains several charters of King Ine which are considered to be forgeries (Bates 1899: 4; Scott Holmes 1911: 82), and one of King Cynewulf dated to 762, which is considered genuine (Bates 1899: 47). None of these purport to be foundation charters however, merely donations of property to an existing community. Both Ine and Cynewulf were vigorous monastic patrons, and it is possible that the forgeries represent a body of genuine endowments, rather than outright fabrications. Certainly the charters suggest that the monastery was founded prior to Cynewulf's donation in 762, and it may well date to the late seventh century and fall within the era of patronage associated with King Ine.

There is no firm evidence for the location of the earliest foundation at Muchelney Abbey, but a similar topographical situation to that at Glastonbury can be proposed. The later abbey was located on an area of sloping ground within the Somerset Levels at the foot of one of its characteristic raised islands to the north east (Figure

2.6). Although there is no historical or archaeological evidence at present to indicate a foundation earlier than the late seventh or eighth century, the similarity to the other islands within the Levels does suggest that the existence of a religious or eremitical precursor to the abbey on the high ground adjacent to it must be considered a possibility.

Excavations at the abbey *c.*1950 uncovered masonry in the east end of the later monastic church that was identified as the eighth-century church, retained as a crypt to the Romanesque structure (Reynolds 1950: 120), as at Ripon or Hexham. However, re-examination of the data has cast doubt on this interpretation, suggesting it may be late Saxon or Norman, and would thus not correspond with the foundation of the abbey[19]. The existing remains of the later monastic church may have been on the site of the earlier one, notwithstanding this reinterpretation. However, the possibility that it was one of several aligned structures or even a later addition to an earlier church to the east or west must also be considered in the light of evidence from Glastonbury and other minster sites. The initial focus of the early monastery may thus have been positioned axially to the known church, particularly to the west in the area later occupied by the home farm.

[19] English Heritage retains unpublished notes on the excavation and abbey by Hall and Gilyard-Beer (uncatalogued, South West Regional Office), who considered the masonry in question Romanesque. However, Mann (forthcoming) presents a reappraisal of the evidence, which can be argued plausibly as late Saxon in date.

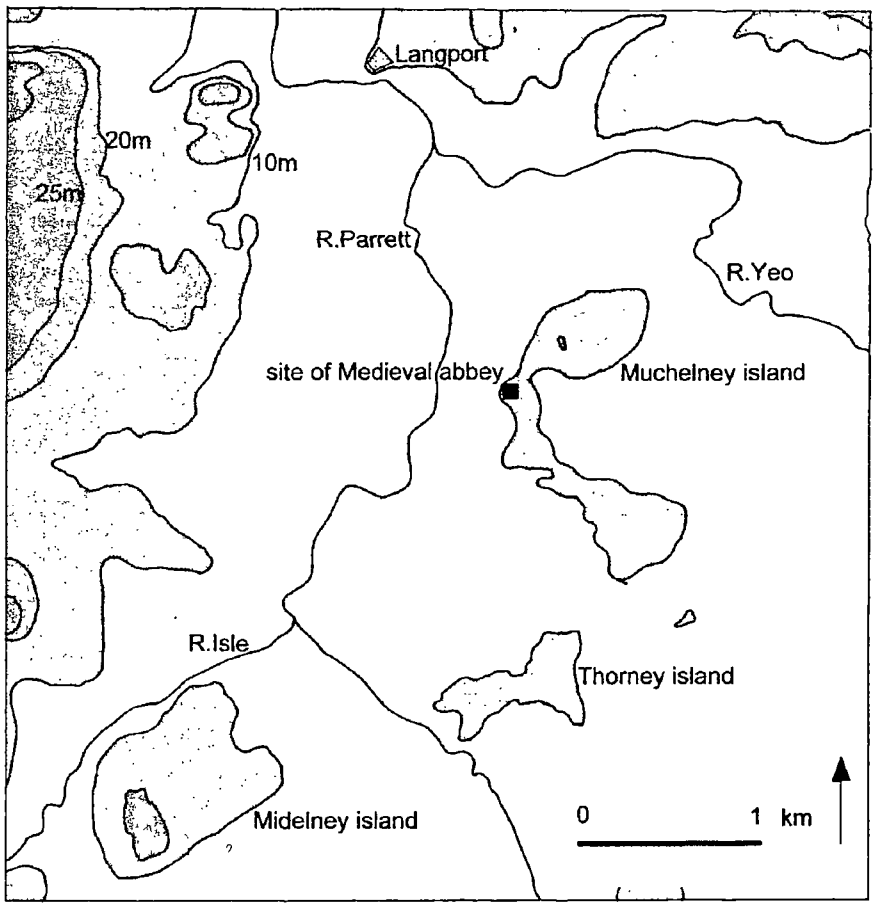

Figure 2.6 The location of Muchelney Abbey

2.5 Continuity and hiatus

During the late eighth and ninth centuries, England was subject to a series of raids and invasions by Danish forces, who have been credited with severe disruption to, and even destruction of, religious life across the country. The paucity of archaeological evidence of any sort for the early period of monastic foundation in the region makes the impact of this activity difficult to assess in direct physical terms. Only Glastonbury has furnished archaeological evidence which demonstrates that continuity of site was sustained from the seventh to tenth centuries (Radford 1981) and there is little to suggest that the physical establishment itself was destroyed by the invasions.

For the other houses, we lack evidence to demonstrate even where the earliest buildings were located, and thus cannot speculate about the degree to which the community and its monastery were interrupted or continued throughout the period in landscape terms. In general however, many of the major tenth century monasteries were refoundations of early houses and the continuity of institutions can be traced, if not their site. Continuity in property ownership can also be established in some cases. Charters such as Cynewulf's grant to Muchelney Abbey (Bates 1899: 47) or Osric's foundation endowment to Bath Minster (Hunt 1893: i, 7) can be demonstrated in general terms to enumerate estates that formed the core of endowments with which the refounded houses were provided, and indeed the core of their estates at Domesday. However, Glastonbury Abbey is the only house whose pre-Conquest estates and charters have been subject to comprehensive modern historical examination. Pertinently for landscape studies, its author concludes that whatever the nature of the community in this period, 'a suspension of monastic discipline need not have meant the dissolution of the endowment and the end of corporate landholding' (Abrams 1996: 7)[20].

[20] See Costen (1992) for a contrasting argument.

2.6 Alfred and reform

Alfred defeated Guthrum at the Battle of Edington in Somerset in 878, and his subsequent reign is considered as a golden age in the development of the West Saxon kingdom, and English political, social and religious life generally.[21] He established two monasteries in the south west in *c.*888, Athelney in Somerset (Figure 2.7) for men, and Shaftesbury in Dorset for women, and was involved in several other monastic and religious projects, such as the refoundation of Wilton Abbey (see 2.6.2).

Alfred's use of religious personnel from the continent to populate his new foundations, there being no-one suitable locally (Keynes & Lapidge 1983: 103), has been considered as proof that religious life had lapsed in the area and that he reinstated it. However, in the rest of Europe, monastic life was undergoing fundamental changes in its organization and spiritual development in the ninth century. The establishment of the reformed community at Cluny Abbey in 909 was a visible culmination of a tide of spiritual reform and regeneration across the continent[22]. The division between secular and monastic religious communities was becoming more formalized, and the Synod of Aachen in 816-7, which adopted the Rule of St Benedict as the observance for monastic communities, was intended to regularize monastic practice (Price 1982: 5). Thus it may not be that religious life had lapsed entirely in southern England, rather that Alfred wished to reform existing practice and create more formal monastic communities. Indeed, there are traditions of earlier foundations at both of his 'flagship' foundations. The dedication of Athelney to Athelwine, a seventh-century royal saint, combined with its topographic situation, might suggest that there was an earlier hermitage or cell on the island before Alfred's foundation. Similarly, documentary evidence suggests that there may have been an establishment at Shaftesbury as early as the seventh century (Keen 1984: 213). Combined with his refoundation at Wilton, the evidence suggests that the thrust of Alfred's religious activities may well have been reform and revival, rather than entirely new ventures.

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[21] See Hinton (1994) and Dumville (1992) for discussion about the context of Alfred's kingship and social and monastic reform before Dunstan and the tenth century.
[22] See Lawrence (1989: 19-100) for a useful summary of this reform period.

2.6.1 Athelney

The ninth and tenth centuries were critical in the development of monastic planning as well as spiritual practice across Europe, and it is possible that this was reflected in Alfred's foundations at Athelney and Shaftesbury. Although there is no archaeological evidence for the layout of Alfred's monastery at Athelney, the twelfth-century description by William of Malmesbury of Alfred's church[23] suggests continental influence in its design. It was:

"rather modest in extent because of the lack of space, but compact after the new method of construction. Four posts, driven into the ground, hold up the whole structure, with four chancels of curved construction built in a circuit." (Hamilton 1870: 199, trans. author)[24]

The implication that the church was built with complex apsidal ends, may suggest that it was a Carolingian style monastic church, such as that at St Germigny-des-Pres (Clapham 1930: 147), and that the monastic revival instigated by Alfred in the late ninth century may have been accompanied by architectural innovation from the Carolingian Empire, as well as religious personnel (Aston 1993a: 55). Traditionally, the emergence of a mature claustral plan in Europe, famously recorded by the plan of St Gall (Price 1982), has been associated with the early ninth century, although recent research suggests some sites may have had a claustral plan by the second half of the eighth century (Gem 1997a). In either case, with a foundation date in the late ninth century, and the suggestion of strong continental influences, Athelney falls well within the chronological framework of the debate about the development of monastic architecture in Europe, and any future work on the island must be considered of high potential importance for the understanding of the role of Britain in this Europe-wide debate.

[23] William assumed that the structure he visited was Alfred's church and not a later rebuild.
[24] I am grateful to Frank & Caroline Thorn for help with this translation.

2.6.2 Wilton

The foundation of Wilton Abbey occupies a critical position with respect to the historical narrative of the late Saxon period. Traditional foundation legends place the establishment of the nunnery in 830, and credited it to the endowment of an aristocratic patron (Critall 1956: 231). Previously, the account has always been assumed to be a spurious late source (ibid.), but recent authors have suggested that it embodies a genuine narrative about the origins of the house (Haslam 1984a: 123). Clearly this places the foundation within the period when monastic patronage and religious life is considered to have been at a low ebb because of political uncertainty. However, it seems likely that the nunnery represents a more long-lived religious tradition, and that the foundation in 830 represented the enlargement of a much earlier minster establishment, possibly founded as early as the seventh century in conjunction with the royal settlement (ibid.).

Wilton formed part of a group of late Saxon nunneries in Wessex founded, endowed and occupied by aristocratic and royal patrons. It included Romsey, Wherwell and St Mary's, Winchester (Hampshire) and Shaftesbury (Dorset), as well as Amesbury in Wiltshire (see below). They were peculiar to the late ninth and tenth centuries, and, as Gilchrist has pointed out, stand in contrast to the double communities which included women in the earlier period (1994: 25). Shaftesbury and Wilton were the earliest nunneries in the group to be founded (the others belonging to the tenth century), and this suggests that Alfred's reforms may have been fundamental to the development of the concept, although interestingly, both houses retained traditions of an earlier ninth-century foundation.

2.7 Dunstan and reform: the tenth century

The religious reforms that originated in the West Country in the tenth century had a profound influence on the development of monasticism, not just within the region itself, but throughout England. The reforms, stimulated by the activities of Dunstan at Glastonbury, as well as other reformers, such as Aethelwold, across the country, were responsible for the re-establishment of fully regular monastic life at a

substantial body of institutions, and expunged the laxity and poor practice that was perceived to be present in contemporary religious life[25]. They reflected very much similar changes taking place in the rest of Europe, as Alfred's reforms had. The foundation of Cluny Abbey in 909 was an important step in monastic reform, and a continuing process of reform can be identified throughout the eleventh century as well (Lackner 1972: 40).

These reforms were fundamental in determining the monastic character of the region throughout the Middle Ages, and the pattern of establishments that appear in Domesday is essentially, with the exception of alien property, a reiteration of the pattern established by Dunstan's reforms. The seventh- and eighth-century foundations at Bath, Glastonbury, Malmesbury and Muchelney were all reformed during this period, the first three reputedly by Dunstan himself, as were the Alfredan houses at Athelney and Wilton.

The reform process was not solely about the re-invigoration of existing houses, but also about their disappearance in some cases. It is really during the tenth century that the division between sites that were 'successful', and as such have left a definitive mark on the archaeological and historical record, and those which have disappeared largely from view, was made. Aldhelm was credited by William of Malmesbury with the foundation of two monasteries in the ancient region of Selwood (Barker 1984) in the eighth century, at Bradford-on-Avon and Frome (Hamilton 1870: 346). Neither became established institutions beyond the eighth century and thus little is known about them beyond these claims. Similarly, Tisbury in southern Wiltshire was recorded as a monastery in 710 AD, and several eighth-century abbots are recorded, but little else is known about it (Jackson 1985). These houses probably lapsed well before the tenth century[26], but the manors of both Bradford and Tisbury were granted to Shaftesbury Abbey in 1001 and 984 respectively (Harvey 1998; Jackson 1985)[27]. It may be that this represents the retention of these sites within the

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[25] The historical context and evidence for the life and reforms of St Dunstan have been comprehensively reviewed in Ramsey et al (1992), with papers by Brooks dealing with his life and Costen with the landscape of Glastonbury in the tenth century.

[26] William of Malmesbury attributes the destruction of Bradford and Frome to the Danes (Hamilton 1870: 346).

[27] One interpretation of the early charters in the Shaftesbury Abbey cartulary suggests there may have been some link with the estates of Tisbury as early as the seventh century (Keen 1984: 213).

monastic landscape of the region, although they did not survive as institutions. Similarly, the donation of a valuable estate at Damerham to Glastonbury Abbey in *c.*945 (Abrams 1996: 104), may reflect a recognition of the monastery mentioned in Alfred's will (Keynes & Lapidge 1983: 178). Of other sites suggested as Saxon monasteries or minsters in earlier periods we hear no more. Both Congresbury or Banwell, also mentioned in Alfred's will (ibid.: 97) disappear from the historical record at this date. The positive action provided by the reform process at this date was critical in shaping the future monastic character of the region.

2.7.1 Amesbury

The only new foundation during this period was the nunnery at Amesbury. The community's formal roots dated it to 979, a royal foundation made by the widow of King Edgar. It was one of a number of royal nunnery foundations in Wessex, established in the ninth and tenth centuries. However, the nunnery retained legends of an earlier foundation, and it is possible that it was associated in some way with an earlier religious institution. The settlement at Amesbury developed from obscure origins at the foot of an Iron Age hillfort, but like Wilton, was probably a royal vill by the seventh century (Haslam 1984a: 130). It is likely therefore that Amesbury was already in possession of a minster by the tenth century, and the nunnery foundation must be viewed with respect to this[28]. The foundation legends of the nunnery linked it to St Melor, an obscure saint of unreliable hagiography, but who was probably a Breton saint from an early Celtic tradition (Farmer 1978: 288). Its occurrence at Amesbury, outside a Brittany and Cornwall tradition can probably be explained by King Athelstan's interest in such saints and their relics (ibid.), rather than the direct link with the saint claimed by the monastery or an early 'Celtic' association (Pugh 1956: 242).

[28] The complex relationship between the town, minster and nunnery is dealt with by Haslam (1984), and Pugh (1947), as well as in a series of papers edited by Chandler (1979).

2.7.2 Dunstan and claustral architecture

Glastonbury occupies a position of critical importance in the debate about the origins of claustral architecture in Britain, because of its historical association with Dunstan, and the fact that a large proportion of the excavated evidence for cloisters in the country before the eleventh century, comes from the site. As the instigator of monastic revival in Britain, Dunstan is traditionally also credited with the introduction of claustral architecture (Clapham 1934: 192; Coppack 1990: 64). At Glastonbury, there is excavated evidence for a formal cloister, as well as the church of St John the Baptist, of tenth-century date, both of which have been associated with Dunstan (Rahtz 1993: 77). Unlike the later standard claustral plan, the excavated buildings, representing the east, south and west ranges, were separated from the south wall of the main church by a cemetery, with the cemetery wall effectively forming the north range (Radford 1981: 124)[29]. Only St Augustine's, Canterbury, has produced excavated evidence for claustral arrangements of similar quality and early date (Potts 1934: 179-182). Two successive cloisters were excavated there, the earlier usually considered to be Dunstan's work as well[30] (Clapham 1934: 192; Rahtz 1993: 91). This was a cloister located directly adjacent to the to the church, following the pattern that was later to become standard. It may be worth noting however, that Clapham did not entirely rule out earlier origins for the cloister at St Augustine's (1934: 192).

At the other tenth-century establishments in the region, evidence for the monastic buildings is fragmentary or non-existent, although historical evidence suggests that building programmes were under way at other monasteries as well as Glastonbury. William of Malmesbury describes the rebuilding of both the church and the domestic areas of his home monastery throughout the tenth century (Hamilton 1870: 405), and this was presumably some form of early cloister, but no evidence of it survives. Athelstan was a generous benefactor to the abbey in this period and was buried in the monastic church. Bath Priory, renowned for its impressiveness throughout preceding centuries, was rebuilt by Edgar at this date (Hamilton 1870: 194).

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[29] This disposition of the cemetery is paralleled in the excavated evidence from Jarrow and Monkwearmouth (Cramp 1969) of earlier date.
[30] The second dating to the eleventh century.

Similarly, the earliest surviving masonry in the church foundations at Muchelney can possibly be assigned to the refoundation by Athelstan in the early tenth century (Mann forthcoming).

The lack of archaeological remains from the tenth and eleventh century in the region must be considered a serious lacuna in our knowledge of monastic houses during a critical period of architectural development. The wide-scale spiritual rejuvenation of monastic houses in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, as indicated by historical sources, is difficult to place in context when the layout and construction of the existing institutions is unknown. At Glastonbury, a continuity in the focus of the establishment can be identified from the eighth century to the Conquest and beyond, but at most sites, the exact relationship between the Norman houses and their predecessors is unknown mostly.

2.7.3 Precinct and burh: the landscape of the monastery in the tenth century

At the eve of the Norman Conquest, many of the monastic houses in the region were urban or suburban in character. Malmesbury, Bath and Athelney were all settlements fortified by Alfred and appear in the early tenth century Burghal Hidage document (Dumville 1992: 24). Although Athelney Abbey was located at some distance from Lyng, it was established in the same period as the settlement was defended, and the island was considered to be home to both fort and religious community (Keynes & Lapidge 1983: 271). The monastery was situated on an island approached from Lyng by a causeway (Figure 2.7) and the wider precinct of the early monastery was probably defined by the contours of the island and accompanying water level, and may well have continued to be so throughout the Middle Ages. Geophysical survey of the island in 1993 (GSB 93/95; Croft, Gaffney & Gaffney 1993) revealed no evidence of anything resembling the *vallum monasterii* or buildings that might be expected for the early phase of development.

In contrast, the monastery at Bath lay entirely within the limits of the ancient Roman town at Bath from its inception, and the landscape of its precinct was coterminous with the development of the Saxon town. The exact position of the late Saxon

monastery is unknown, but skeletal remains dating to the tenth century suggest it was located near the main spring of the Roman complex, in the same place as the medieval abbey. Manco's (1993) reconstruction of the Saxon street system suggests that the monastic precinct may have occupied the small area between the east wall of the town and the main streets to the south and east gates (Figure 2.8) in an area which was enlarged and re-planned in the immediate post-Conquest period (see Chapter 5).

The degree to which the establishment of burghal fortifications at Malmesbury in the early tenth century entailed replanning of an existing settlement is unclear. There is no structural evidence to indicate the location of the late Saxon monastery, but fragmentary archaeological remains suggest that the monastic precinct probably lay in the area of the medieval abbey by this period. Two small trenches to the north west of the market cross revealed evidence for late Saxon burials, a wall and ditch, all of which went out of use in the twelfth century in advance of the new market place (Hawkes 1993). Although the excavated portion of the ditch was extremely small, its general alignment suggested a course marked by a small lane running along the parish boundary of St Paul. The road system within the burh suggests that it was laid out with respect to an existing monastic precinct in this area.

Both Amesbury and Wilton developed in close connection with royal Saxon towns, but lack firm archaeological evidence to confirm their exact relationship to them. At Wilton the site of the present St Mary's church, which lies within the area of the town probably occupied by the royal Saxon complex, was probably the site of the early minster and nunnery for part of its life (Figure 2.9) (Haslam 1984a: 123). Ultimately, the medieval abbey lay east of the town below Wilton House, and thus a move must have occurred at some point. Alfred is recorded as moving the nunnery when he refounded it in the late ninth century (Critall 1956: 125), but whether within or to this site is unclear. Haslam considers the move to the Wilton House site to have taken place in the tenth century (1984a: 125), although in the absence of archaeological evidence, a move in the post-Conquest period is also possible.

The relationship between town, minster and nunnery is similarly complex at Amesbury and its interpretation hampered by lack of evidence. Two contrasting

models for the location of the nunnery have been suggested[31]. Hinton's (1979) suggestion that the nunnery was founded away from the town at the site of the medieval abbey is hampered by the absence of any record of the nunnery having an independent land endowment within the manor at Domesday (Figure 2.8) (Pugh 1947: 102). Instead, Chandler's (1979) hypothesis appears far more attractive. He suggests that the nunnery was associated with, rather than separate to, an existing minster within in the royal complex, thought to lie in the vicinity of the present parish church. The move away from the town would thus have taken place at the refoundation of the nunnery in the twelfth century, leaving the pre-Conquest nunnery as the core of the canons' complex and parish church.

[31] These arguments are comprehensively summarized in Haslam (1984: 130).

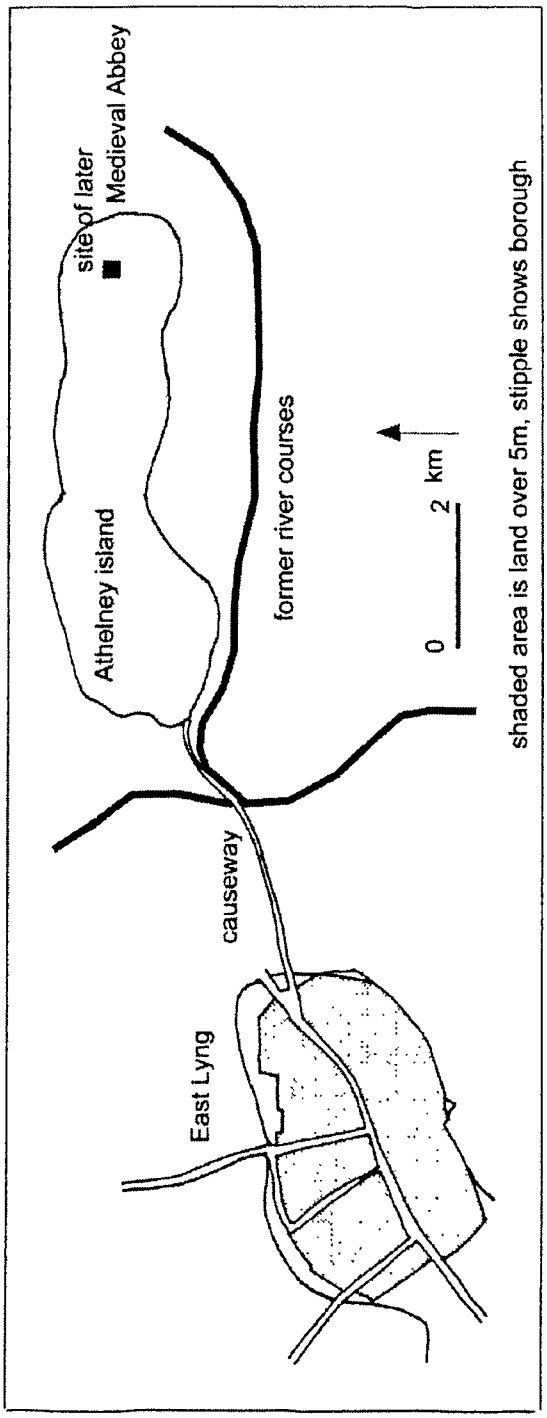

Figure 2.7 The location of Athelney Abbey

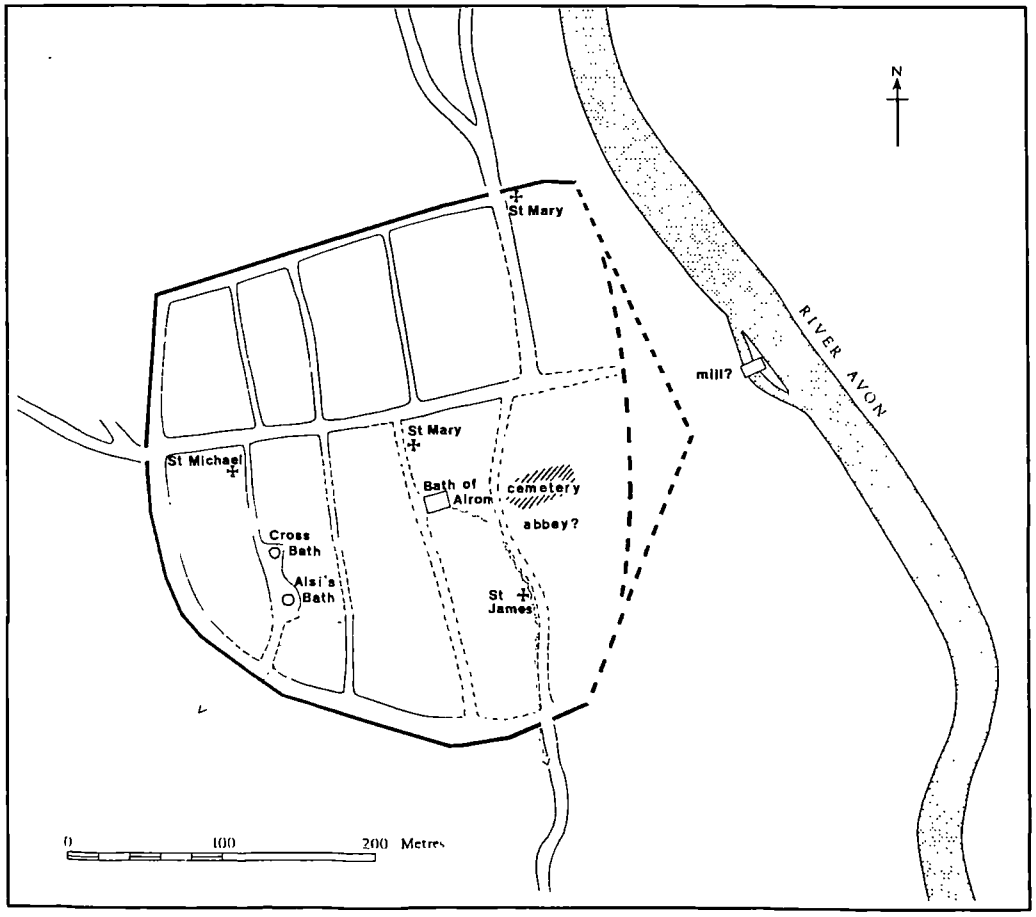

Figure 2.8 Bath Abbey and the Saxon town (from Manco 1993)

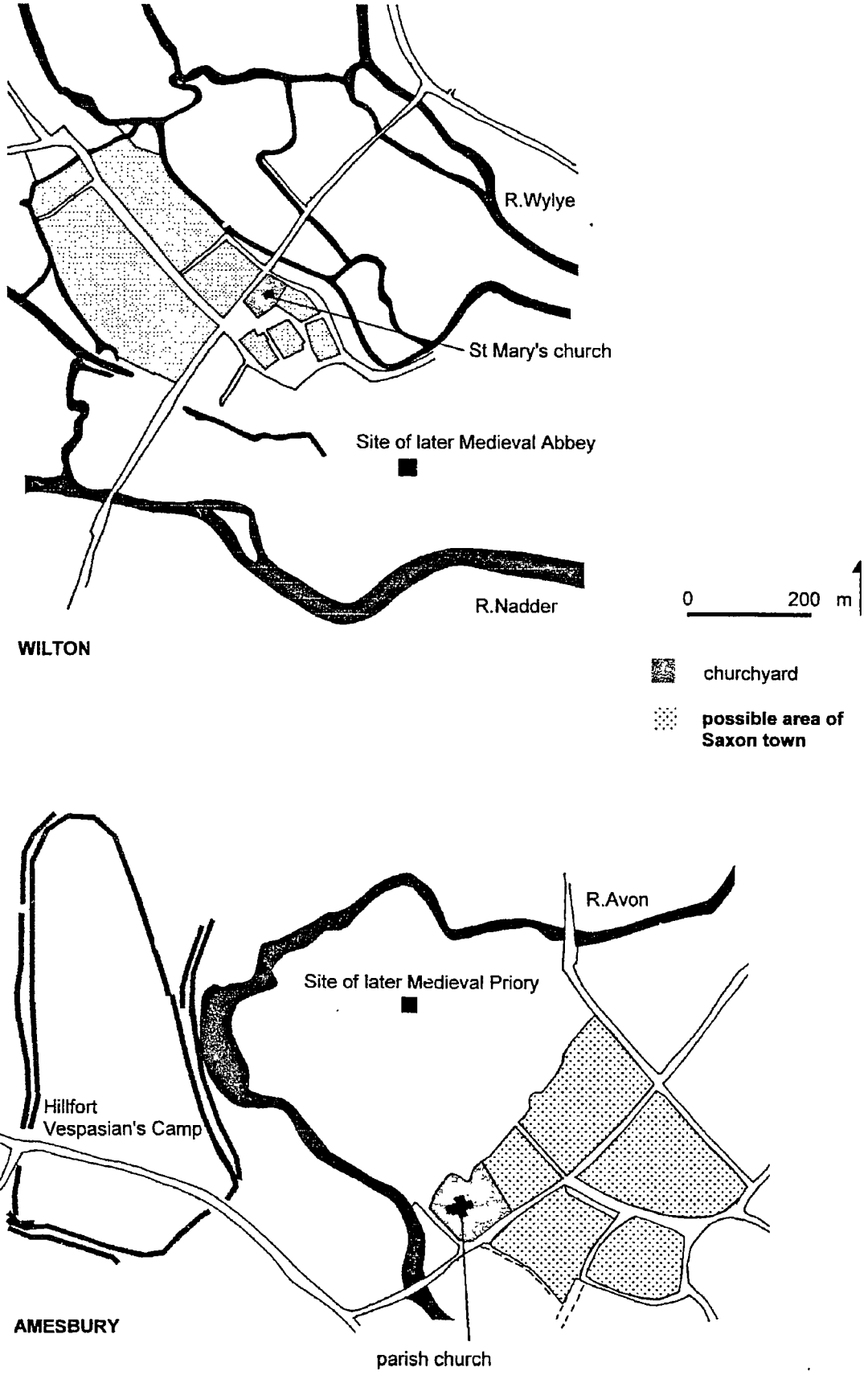

Figure 2.9 Possible monastic sites and towns at Amesbury and Wilton

2.8 Conclusion

Several trends in the early foundation pattern of monastic houses in the region emerge from the fragmentary archaeological and historical evidence. The seventh and eighth centuries were critical in the establishment of a Saxon ecclesiastical structure across the region, based on a minster system. A distinct variation in character across the region can be identified however. In Wiltshire, this early period of development was achieved largely by the establishment of secular minsters and colleges in association with royal settlements, which proliferated across the county. The foundation of monastic establishments was instead a process restricted largely to the late Saxon period, and both Amesbury and Wilton may represent the refoundation of two of these early minsters. The only exception to this was Malmesbury Abbey. Both it and Bath Priory can be seen as products of a very particular political situation in the seventh century, when they were both established at the frontier between the West Saxon and Mercian kingdoms.

In Somerset, a link between the earliest Saxon institutions and previous foci of post-Roman activity can be suggested strongly, based on a continuing Christian tradition associated with high status occupation. The existence of an eremitical theme to some of these establishments can be attributed to their seventh century Saxon origins without recourse to earlier British traditions. Unfortunately however, archaeological evidence for this early phase of monasticism is sparse, and drawing conclusions about their nature and the degree of continuity with later establishments remains uncertain.

Traditionally, the reforms of Dunstan in the mid-tenth century are considered as the most influential phase of monastic development in the region and throughout southern England. However, the evidence suggests that they were the continuation of a movement stimulated earlier, by kings such as Alfred and Athelstan, both of whom were active patrons locally. Indeed, a case can be made strongly that these late Saxon reforms stemmed from even earlier roots, and that they represent the rationalization and reinvigoration of a pattern of monastic patronage and foundation that was established in the seventh and eighth centuries. All three 'new' foundations made in this period- Athelney, Wilton and Amesbury- can be interpreted as the

refoundation of earlier minsters or eremitic religious sites. The important role of royal patronage and the location of the region at the heart of the Wessex kingdom is reflected in the development of the monastic houses, as they accumulated and consolidated large land endowments by royal gift.

The appearance of detail provided by the documentary evidence in the late Saxon period is belied by the archaeological evidence available to provide information about the location and material culture of the monasteries in this period. Their physical development is surprisingly obscure, in contrast to the picture of huge wealth and importance presented by Domesday and the abundance of evidence that emerges in the period following it. Viewed in a critical light, the evidence for the location of the late Saxon monasteries of the region is sparse, and for their layout, virtually non-existent. In contrast, the position of these houses with respect to wider reforming movements suggests that they occupied an important role in the spread of architectural, as well as spiritual, innovation.

3. DEVELOPMENT: THE POST-CONQUEST PERIOD

3.1 Introduction

At the time of the Suppression, there were thirty-four fully regular monastic houses in existence in the West Country, with many more friaries, hospitals and minor houses as well. This large total was the reflection of over one thousand years of religious growth and development throughout the region. The houses were spread across the two counties, and were widely varying in character, from small houses on the remoteness of Exmoor in the west (Barlinch), to the hospitals and friaries of Bristol and Bath and the ancient landed foundations in Saxon towns, such as Wilton and Amesbury.

This chapter provides a description of the latter period of development, from the Norman Conquest to the Suppression of the Monasteries in the sixteenth century. It introduces the individual monasteries founded in this period, the religious groups represented in the region and discusses the key elements which influenced them. The sequence of foundation throughout the region for each group is presented and compared to the pattern of foundation and numbers of houses nationally, so that their distribution can be assessed within the context of wider monastic foundation and patronage.

The development of monastic life throughout the region was a dynamic process and reflected wider changes in religious activity. From the tenth century onwards, we can identify a constant flow of new ideas and reforming movements across Europe, which waxed and waned in popularity and influence, each fundamentally altering the nature of the monasteries established within the landscape. The West Country was at the heart of some of these national changes, such as Dunstan's re-establishment of regular life in England in the tenth century, or the adoption of the Carthusian order in Britain in the twelfth century. However, for others it was peripheral at best and lagged behind other regions in the spread of new ideas. By acknowledging the great variety and changing nature of religious life nationally, it is possible to build a picture

of the region in comparison to this, and discuss which elements were fundamental in determining its development.

The decline and ultimate cessation of monastic life in the West Country is also discussed in this chapter. The loss of public support and the adverse affects of fashion were as critical to the monasteries as enthusiasm and piety and played a key role in regional and national religious development. Henry VIII was, of course, responsible for the final Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536-1540, but the decline and failure of individual houses, orders and particular types of religious expression can be traced for many centuries before this.

The most wide-ranging modern gazetteer for monastic studies in this country is *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales* (Knowles & Hadcock 1971). Where no other reference is given in the subsequent discussion, national fiscal statistics and details of foundation date are taken from this work. Several errors, particularly for smaller and marginal establishments in Somerset and Wiltshire have been noted during this study and these are indicated where relevant. The role of this chapter is not to discuss the history and development of each order, and references are provided to specialist studies instead.

3.2 The black monks, nuns and canons[1]

The establishments of black monks, canons and nuns –Cluniacs, Benedictines and Augustinians- were a large and disparate collection of individual houses; rather than three religious orders bounded by strict and centralised constitutions, such as the Cistercians or Carthusians. The family of black monks and nuns consisted primarily of Benedictine houses- those houses which had adopted the rule of St Benedict in

[1] This section considers the Cluniacs, Benedictines and Augustinians and their alien dependencies. Although the Augustinians did share many characteristics with the new orders (section 3.2.5), they were essentially a collection of individual establishments, as the Benedictines were, rather than a centralised order, like the Cistercians, which is why they have been included in this section.

the reforms of the pre-Conquest period[2], and those which owed their origins to the dynamic patronage and reforms in eleventh-century Normandy.

The Benedictine abbey of Cluny (Saône et Loire), founded in 910, had generated a family of daughter houses of its own. The Cluniacs were distinguished from the Benedictines in their strongly hierarchical structure and because of this, Cluniac houses in England were considered alien, despite the fact that the majority operated as fully autonomous communities, dependent only in name. In contrast, there were several Benedictine alien priories in the region- all of which were small institutions dependent on motherhouses in France. There was also one alien cell at Charlton which was Premonstratensian rather than Benedictine[3].

The Augustinian congregation of canons owed its origins to the reforms that swept Europe in the eleventh century. The rule of St Augustine was adopted by many of the informal communities of clerics that existed across Europe and many new houses of canons were also established. Indeed, the flexibility of the rule allowed a diverse range of houses to use it as a guide for monastic life. The West Country was unusual for its high number of Victorine houses, an order of canons which also followed the rule of St Augustine (see section 3.2.6), and fell within the Augustinian family.

Altogether five new Benedictine and sixteen[4] Augustinian houses were founded in the region after the Conquest, as well as two houses of the order of Cluny and seven alien establishments (Figure 3.3). The Augustinian monasteries form an extremely large and diverse group that included two female houses, whilst the Benedictine examples are notable for their paucity, with just two dependent male houses and three small nunneries founded in the centuries following the Conquest. Their pattern

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[2] The subsequent discussion relates to houses founded after the Conquest and does not include the surviving Saxon Benedictine houses.

[3] The Premonstratensians were essentially regular canons following a lifestyle akin to that of the Cistercians, and their inhabitants were white canons rather than black (Colvin 1951). Charlton has been included in this section because it was a dependent cell, suppressed in the fourteenth century as alien, which none of the independent houses of the order were. It was purely an economic property and did not support a community, which might have merited its inclusion in section 3.3.

[4] This does not include those hospitals where the Rule of St Augustine provided the code for life.

of distribution across the region can be shown to agree with trends noted for the foundation of each group in general (e.g. Robinson 1980; Gilchrist 1994).

Chronologically, the foundation of Benedictine and Augustinian houses in the region began comparatively late (Figure 3.1). Only Dunster was established before 1100, and apart from this, the foundations did not really begin until 1120, sixty years after the Conquest. The evidence from Domesday Book suggests that this gap was filled by the donation of property to French motherhouses and the establishment of alien dependencies rather than complete new monastic houses (see section 3.2.4), as it was in many parts of the country (Burton 1994: 35). The two Cluniac houses were also founded towards the start of the post-Conquest period.

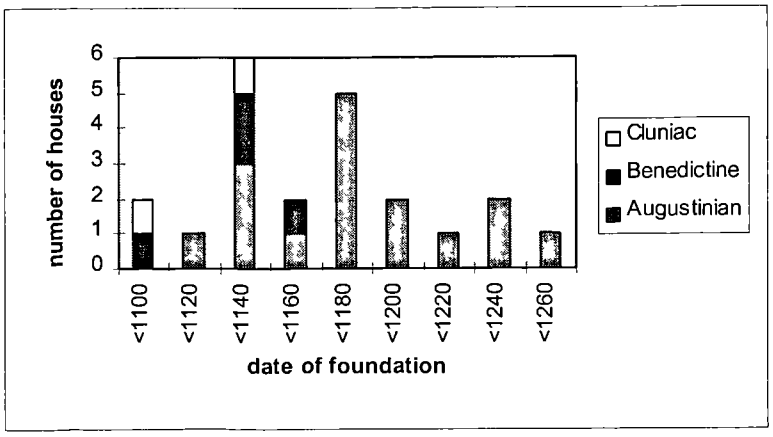

Figure 3.1 Foundation of black monks, nuns and canons in the region

The middle of the twelfth century saw a wave of Benedictine and Augustinian foundations, clustered mainly at the start of Stephen's reign (1135-1154) and in the middle of Henry II's (1154-1189). All of the Benedictine houses were founded before or during the twelfth century[5], which reflects the national foundation pattern for these houses. Nationally, only six Benedictine houses were founded in the thirteenth century or later, all of them minor in size except St Helen's nunnery, London. The establishment of Augustinian houses may well have been over before figure 3.1 suggests; two of the latest, Stavordale and Longleat, probably having been founded before their emergence in the historical record indicates. Again, the same pattern

[5] The foundation date of Barrow Gurney is not certain, but appears to be prior to 1200 (Knowles & Hadcock 1971)

can be observed nationally for the Augustinians (Robinson 1980), with later houses being smaller and less prominent than the earlier foundations.

3.2.1 Benedictine monks

The most striking fact about this chronological distribution is the paucity of Benedictine foundations, and the absence of early and wealthy examples altogether. Nationally, a considerable number of Benedictine houses was established in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries (Figure 3.2), and these represented the majority of the large wealthy houses of the group, including the abbeys at Selby (Yorkshire), Battle (Sussex) and Coventry (West Midlands) and the cathedral priory at Norwich. Somerset and Wiltshire missed this phase of foundation entirely, and the south west region generally was lacking in Benedictine establishments (the exceptions being Exeter, Totnes, Tywardreath and the nunnery at Polsloe).

This can probably be attributed to the grip and dominance held by the pre-Conquest houses across Wessex and the west. Nationally, the majority of the new Benedictine foundations were spread across northern and central-eastern England and south Wales, directly contrasting with the densest areas of Saxon monastic settlement (Figure 3.4). The high concentration of Saxon foundations in the West Country and Hampshire can be seen, and the map of Domesday estates belonging to Saxon foundations in Somerset and Wiltshire (see chapter 7) illustrates the large proportion of local property already owned by monastic houses, and the lack of 'space' for major new foundations. The high number of manors and churches donated to alien houses in the immediate post-Conquest period may also have filled the pious expectations of the new Norman patrons.

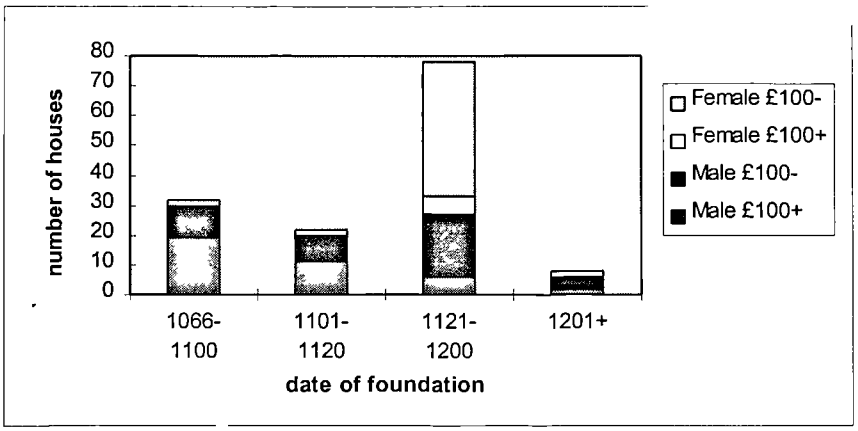

Figure 3.2 Foundation date and value in 1535 of Benedictine houses nationally

The two West Country male foundations were at Dunster and Bristol St James, and were both dependencies of large pre-Conquest establishments; Bath and Tewkesbury respectively. Both were small and worth only £37 and £57 at the Suppression[6], and neither achieved independence from their motherhouses throughout their life. Both were founded by wealthy Norman families with extensive interests in the towns they were established in: Dunster by the Mohuns, and Bristol by the earls of Gloucester.

[6] Throughout this chapter, fiscal values described as 'at the Suppression' or 'in 1535' refer to the net value of the monastery taken from the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (Caley et al 1810-1834). Those for houses within the West Country are taken from the author's research on the source, other houses rely on Knowles & Hadcock's (1971) reproduction of the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* figures.

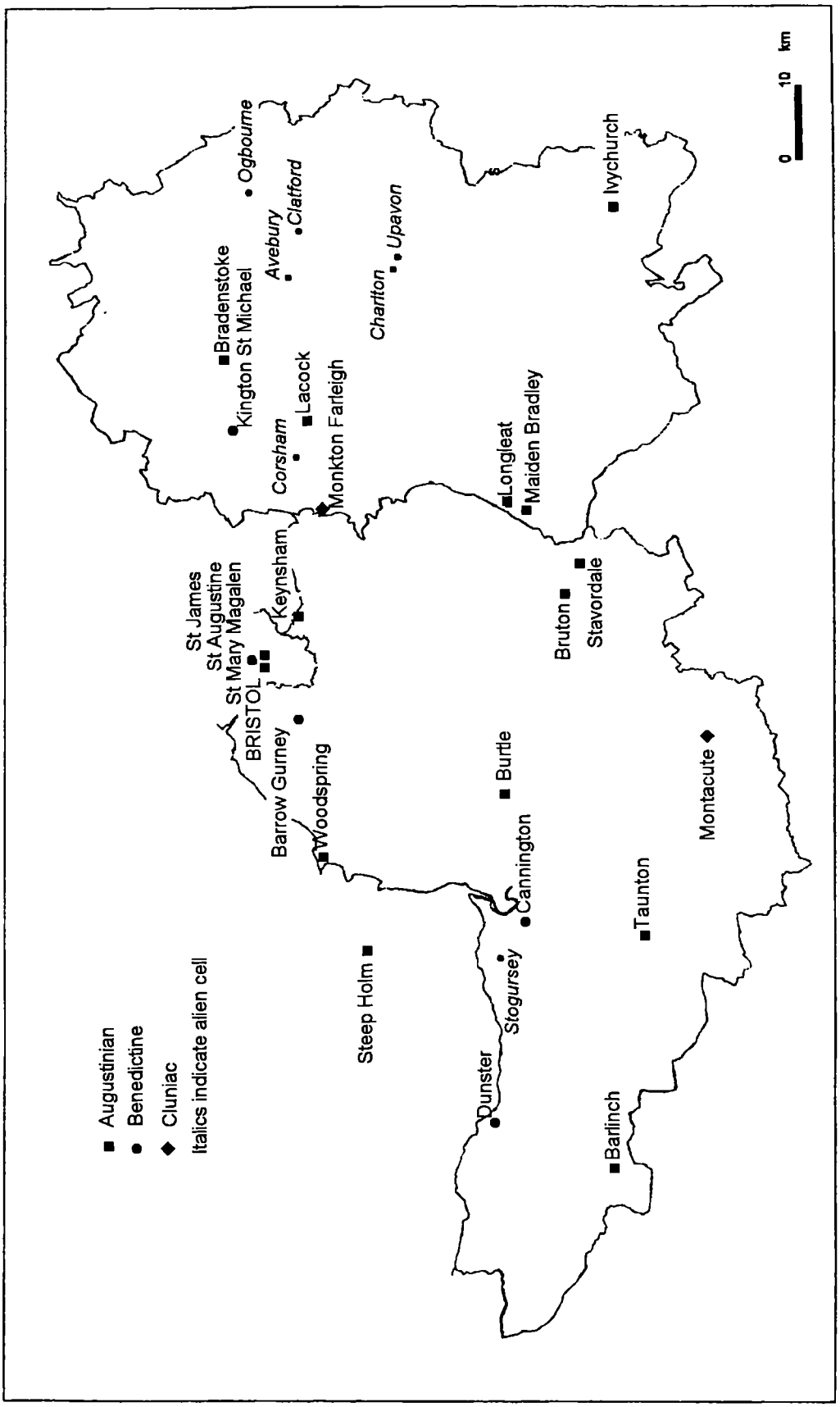

Figure 3.3 Distribution of post-Conquest foundations of the black monks, nuns and canons in the region

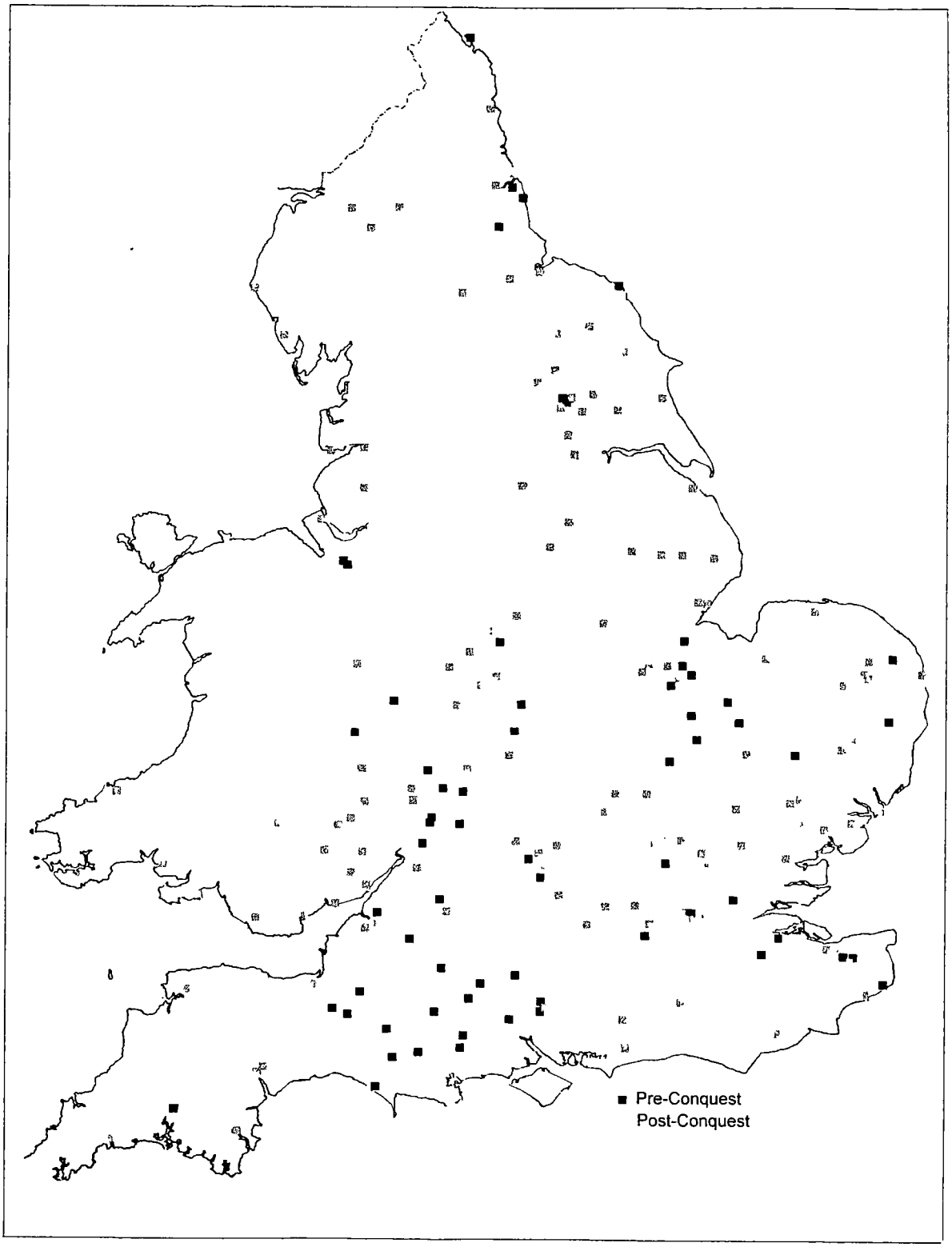

Figure 3.4 Distribution of pre-and post-Conquest Benedictine foundations nationally (after Knowles & Hadcock 1971)

3.2.2 Benedictine nuns

The late foundation of the Benedictine houses in the region also explains the resulting high proportion of female houses. The three nunneries (Barrow Gurney, Cannington, Kington St Michael) were all late establishments, and were very small - worth between £20-40 each at the Suppression- which reflects exactly the national situation, where the later the date of foundation, the greater the incidence of small and female houses (Figure 3.2). The majority of post-Conquest nunneries were founded in clusters across the north east, east Anglia and the south east, and the south west generally had very few new nunneries compared to the rest of the country (Gilchrist 1994). It is only the lack of male foundations that makes the number of nunneries in the region seem striking. Only a handful (six) of the post-Conquest female foundations nationally, such as Godstow (Oxfordshire), Elstow (Bedfordshire) and Markyate (Hertfordshire) can be considered wealthy, and small establishments like the three West Country nunneries were much more common. The dominance of the Saxon nunneries of Wessex is again notable, particularly in southern Wiltshire and Hampshire.

3.2.3 Cluniac monks

There were two houses of the Cluniac family in the West Country, at Montacute and Monkton Farleigh. Montacute was one of the earliest establishments of the order in the country, although its exact foundation date is uncertain. It is reputed to have been founded as early as 1078 (SRS 1894), but this is unlikely, given its absence from Domesday. The first charter recorded is by William, the second count of Mortain, and it is most probable that he was the founder rather than his father, which places the foundation date after 1090 (Scott Holmes 1911: 111).

The first English Cluniac house was founded at Lewes in 1077[7], and Montacute was thus part of a small group of large, powerful houses established before 1100, which included Castle Acre (Norfolk), Much Wenlock (Shropshire) and Bermondsey

[7] See Golding (1981) on the complicated evidence for the foundation of Lewes and the origins of the Cluniacs in England.

(Surrey). In contrast, the majority of the English foundations, which included Monkton Farleigh, were made between 1100-1150, and only a handful of small cells were created after this period. There was a sharp division in size within the order, between the substantial and generally older houses which were valued at over £200 at the Suppression, although most were substantially larger, and small priories and dependent cells worth very little (Figure 3.5). Montacute was the third wealthiest Cluniac house in 1535, valued at £456, whilst Monkton Farleigh, valued at £195, was one of the two or three middle rank houses.

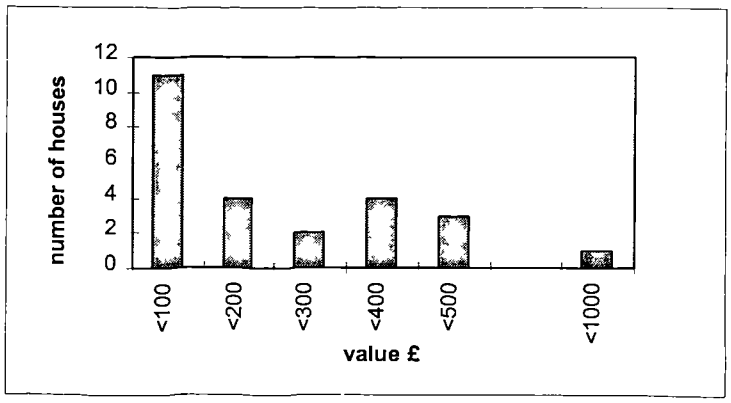

Figure 3.5 Value of Cluniac houses nationally in 1535

The majority of the Cluniac houses were located in southern and central England. Montacute and Monkton Farleigh formed the core of the small number in the south west area (Figure 3.6). Montacute had been founded directly from Cluny itself, and was responsible for three dependent cells in the south west- Kerswell (Devon), Holme (Dorset) and St Carrok (Cornwall)- and one in Wales at Malpas (Monmouthshire), which remained dependent upon it until the Suppression. Monkton Farleigh and Barnstaple (Devon), were the only other two houses in the south west.

3.2.4 Alien establishments

The term 'alien priory'- meaning any monastic establishment dependent on a motherhouse outside Britain- has been widely applied in the history of monastic studies, yet as a group, the character of the establishments it covers has been little investigated[8]. In the eleventh century, nothing more than the ownership of property by foreign houses is recorded in Domesday, but in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the establishment of more substantial communities and administrative centres can be identified in the documentary record.

Nationally, Domesday survey illustrates well the impact that the donation of English property to French and Norman houses had on the development of the monastic landscape in the immediate post-Conquest period. The Norman lords who obtained estates in this country continued to endow the monasteries they were patrons and benefactors of already in France, instead of adding to the wealth of the English houses (Matthew 1962: 28). Despite some entirely new foundations nationally, the most famous being the establishment created by William the Conqueror at Battle (Sussex), the favoured expression of piety in the aftermath of the Conquest nationally was donation to alien motherhouses (ibid.), and the West Country strongly reflects this trend. Indeed, it can be viewed as the dominant form of religious expression at this date in the region. There are no new domestic foundations in the survey for the region[9], nor have the possessions of the surviving Saxon monasteries notably increased. Instead, ten French houses owned property in the region (Figure 3.3), which represents a considerable proportion of the 'nearly thirty' continental houses which had gained property nationally by 1086 (ibid.: 29).

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[8] Morgan (1946) *The English Lands of the Abbey of Bec* is a classic text on the English estates of one foreign house. Her (1942) article covers the historical context of the alien priories generally, topics covered more recently and in more depth by Matthew (1962).
[9] See section 3.2.3 concerning the foundation of Montacute.

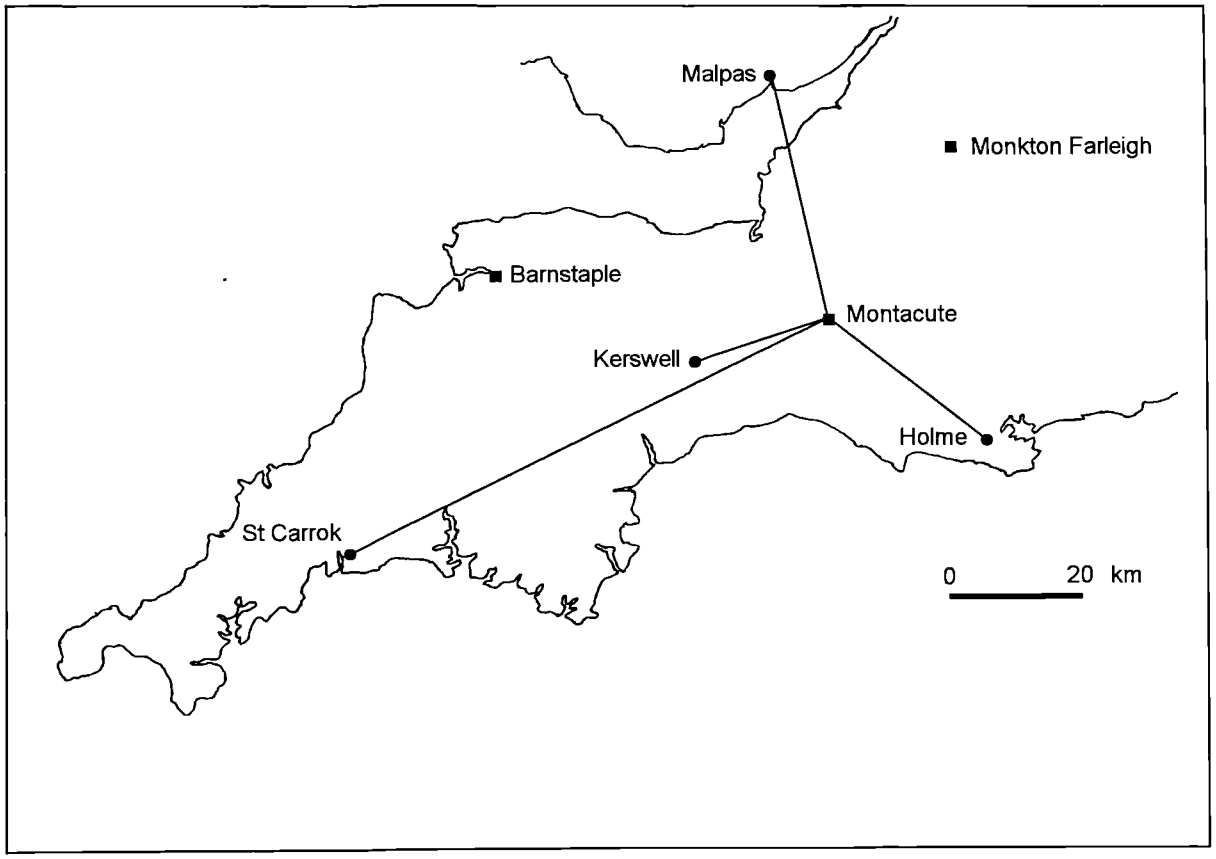

Figure 3.6 Distribution of Cluniac houses in the south west region

The need to administer the property obtained in this way led to the establishment of cells and small priories by the motherhouses on some manors. Knowles and Hadcock (1971) list seven in the region: Stogursey, Ogbourne, Charlton, Clatford, Corsham, Avebury and Upavon, as well as three possible examples, Yenston, Hullavington and Stratton St Margaret. The list is based primarily on antiquarian interpretations of the grants of suppressed priories to new foundations in the fifteenth century[10]. However, the nature of these alien priories is often difficult to establish through documentary research, and archaeological evidence is scarce. It is not possible to suggest a single model for them, because the term embraces a wide range of monastic experience, from houses which functioned as full regular communities to small administrative centres or simply manors owned by alien houses, as recorded at Domesday.

Viewed in a critical light, the list above includes only one house that appears to have been founded with the intention of supporting a religious community, that of Stogursey, dependent on Lonlay (Orne). It was intended for seven monks by its founders William and Geva de Falaise, although this was later much reduced (Tremlett & Blakiston 1949). It was in character thus like the small conventual alien priories of South Wales, such as Goldcliff (Monmouthshire) which was laid out for a prior and twelve monks, Eye (Suffolk) or Tywardreath (Cornwall). Unlike them however, Stogursey did not become an independent community, and was suppressed in c.1442 (ibid.).

The others, like many of the alien priories, did not support more than one or two religious and were established to administer property, rather than achieve a spiritual aim. The largest alien establishment in the region in fiscal terms was undoubtedly Ogbourne St George, owned by St Mary, Bec (Eure). This motherhouse was responsible for numerous establishments and properties in England, ranging from the refoundation of St Werburgh's, Chester as a fully independent community, to the large dependent priory at Goldcliff (Monmouthshire) or small cells at Tooting Bec (Surrey) and Weedon Bec (Northamptonshire) (Morgan 1946). It owned just one manor in the region at Brixton Deverill (Wiltshire) in 1086. However, the establishment at Ogbourne began with the donation of land and churches to Bec in

[10] Primarily the accounts provided by Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1830, vol.6). The documentary evidence relating to these houses is discussed briefly in Matthews (1962).

the early twelfth century, and it grew to be the administrative centre for the motherhouse in England, taking responsibility for all property not assigned to the larger cells and priories (Morgan ibid.). The extent of its entries in the *Taxatio* of 1291 (see chapter 7) indicates the huge estates for which it was responsible. |However, there is no documentary evidence to suggest that this was a fully conventual priory, rather a small community at most, and was firmly economic in function.

Similarly, Avebury, Charlton, Clatford, Corsham and Upavon were all small cells and administrative centres, with no more than two or three inmates ever recorded, usually the prior and one or two others. The manor of Corsham was owned by the Conqueror's foundation at Caen (Calvados) in 1086, but was granted to Marmoutier (Indre et Loire) shortly afterwards, although whatever priory was established there had ceased by the late thirteenth century. Upavon was similarly already in the possession of St Wandrille (Seine Maritime) by 1086, but the others were all later donations. Avebury was one of two cells owned by St Georges Boscherville (Seine Inferieur) in England, the other being at Edith Weston (Rutland). Religious personnel were recorded at both Clatford and Hullavington, owned by St Victor en Caux, but Clatford appears to have been the dominant centre, and by 1291, Hullavington is recorded as one of its properties. The Premonstratensian cell at Charlton was created after the manor was donated to L'Isle Dieu (Eure) by the founder of the motherhouse itself. The final two possible alien cells at Yenston and Stratton St Margaret are both recorded as alien property at different dates- Yenston is in the manor of Henstridge, which was owned by St Severus at Domesday, and Tiron had a spiritual interest in the church at Stratton in 1291, but there is no evidence of a cell being established at either location. Indeed, the above list could be considerably extended if other similar alien properties were included (see Chapter 7).

The existence of the alien priories was fraught with economic difficulties because of their anomalous political position, and many were seized by secular powers throughout the French Wars of the late thirteenth century (Morgan 1942)[11]. Ultimately, the larger alien priories which operated as full monasteries were generally made denizen, and continued as English houses; the Cluniacs being the primary

[11] E.g. see British Library Add. MSS 21344. Religious Houses. Index of the possessions of the alien priores temp. Henry III- VI.

example of this, the majority of their houses becoming denizen in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century[12]. Other alien establishments, including all those in the West Country, were formally suppressed in 1414, and their possessions donated to other monastic and collegiate establishments (ibid.).

In summary, none of the alien establishments in the region, except for Stogursey, appears to have supported a religious community in any real sense, and certainly none attained sufficient spiritual status to become independent establishments. Instead , they all appear to be the undesirable legacy of alien ownership so abhorred by Knowles (1963: 136)[13] and can primarily be considered large monastic granges. There appears to be no correlation between the economic success of these establishments and the existence of a monastic community. Ogbourne St George, valued at over £500 in the late thirteenth century (Caley 1802), could easily have supported a considerable religious community, but there is no evidence for a priory of any size at any date, suggesting that it was entirely intended to generate and manage resources. The others all enjoyed a revenue similar to the small houses of black monks and canons in the region, or perhaps wealthy manors of the greater houses, and only supported enough personnel to administer the estates and no more. As Burton has noted for Yorkshire, the West Country alien establishments 'marked an important stage in the monastic development of the area' (1999: 67), but beyond this, their impact on the spiritual and economic landscape of the region was limited.

3.2.5 Augustinian canons

A wide variety of foundations are included within the sixteen Augustinian houses in the region, from the large establishment of St Augustine's Bristol, to the tiny eremitical foundation on the Somerset Levels at Burtle (Figure 3.3). Augustinian houses were more numerous than any other monastic group in the country, but also the most flexible, with the canons having far more fluid rules about location, property

[12] Amesbury is not considered in this section. Although the Fontevraultine houses were seized briefly by the Crown in 1294, they do not appear to have been considered alien after this date and continued unmolested until the sixteenth century (Chettle 1942).
[13] More recently, Burton (1999: 67) has agreed with Knowles on this point for the Yorkshire alien cells.

ownership and their role in the community than the new orders or even the Benedictines[14]. The Augustinian establishments in the West Country certainly reflect this.

The same chronological and financial trends can be observed for the Augustinians as for the Benedictines nationally, and later houses also tended to be smaller (Robinson 1980: 45). The West Country demonstrates this very well: with the exception of the two female houses, the early establishments were far more wealthy as a group than the later ones, at the Suppression. The Augustinians supplied the bulk of new large and middle-sized monasteries in the region in the absence of any Benedictine initiatives, and there were eight houses worth more than £100 at the Suppression.

Nationally, the Augustinian houses have a high incidence of site changes, early suppression and failure as independent communities, reductions in status and numbers, and even alterations or ambiguities about the rule and foundation circumstances of the house (Robinson 1980 74-98). This pattern is clearly seen in the West County: five of the sixteen houses were suppressed or failed before the Dissolution of Henry VIII's reign. Buckland Priory was the largest twelfth-century foundation to fail: it survived less than twenty years before it was suppressed and refounded as a Hospitaller establishment (see below). The Augustinian canons had been dispersed because of their scandalous conduct, a man having been murdered on the premises (Scott Holmes 1911: 148).

The history of both Steep Holm and Burtle Priories is extremely obscure, but both appear to have been refounded from much earlier hermitages in the late twelfth century[15]. The canons on Steep Holm island disappear from the historical record in the late thirteenth century, perhaps defeated by the harsh conditions in the Severn estuary. Burtle was still in existence in 1535, but was dependent on Glastonbury

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[14] Dickinson (1950) remains the standard historical text on the Augustinian houses in England, whilst Robinson (1980) provides a geographical analysis of their distribution and extent.

[15] The VCH and Knowles & Hadcock (1971) accounts for both priories are misleading and inaccurate concerning their earliest development. See Watkin (1947) and Dunning (1968) for Burtle and Rendell (1981) and (1993) for Steep Holm instead. Appendix 2 has full references for both.

Abbey at this date[16]. The foundation of Longleat Priory is similarly obscure, but it was always small (5-6 canons) and it was suppressed in 1529, when its possessions were granted to Hinton Charterhouse. The small house at Stavordale was made dependent on the greater monastery at Taunton in 1533 owing to financial difficulties, and thus survived suppression until 1540.

Both Taunton and Woodspring Priories were translated from their original sites within several years of foundation (see Chapter 4). At Taunton, this appears to have been prompted by lack of space and overall urban and defensive development plans by the patrons of Taunton, the bishops of Winchester (Bush 1994: 104). At Woodspring, the initial site at *Dodlinch* has not been located and the documentation of the early history of the house is poor, and thus the context of the translation is difficult to assess[17].

3.2.6 Victorine canons

The most striking fact about the Augustinian group in the region is the high proportion of Victorine houses. The Victorines originated at St Victor in Paris in the early twelfth century (Dickinson 1950: 85). It was in part intended as an eremitical institution, but gained a reputation for learning and scholarship and was formally founded as a royal abbey in 1113 (ibid.). The order was a product of the atmosphere of monastic reform of the early twelfth century and operated in a similar fashion to the Cistercians, with a general chapter presiding over the daughter houses, although this appears to have lapsed within a century[18]. Dickinson describes the house at St Victor as 'esteemed all over the western world, the haven of scholars and nursery of bishops' (1950: 86), but it is clear that the English houses of the order do not reflect this prominence adequately.

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[16] Burtle was in the unusual situation of being an Augustinian house dependent on a Benedictine abbey: it appears to have been little more than a cell or grange under a prior and bailiff in 1535.

[17] See chapter 4.

[18] There is a considerable literature on the history of the Victorines in French: see Bonnard (1904-7), Longere (1991) and Jocque & Milis (1984). Little research has been carried out on the English houses of the order, although see Haddock (1999).

The Victorine houses in Britain form two distinct geographical groups (Figure 3.7). The group in the Marches was based on the earliest foundation at Shobdon (c.1131, finally moved to Wigmore), with a dependent cell at Ratlinghope and another house at Wormsley. The stronger group was that in the West Country, and consisted of the houses at Bristol (which was founded from Shobdon), Keynsham, Stavordale and Woodspring. Therefore, nationally, Somerset stands out as hosting more than half of all the Victorine houses in England.

The character and influence of these four houses within the region is less certain however. The siting of the Victorine houses in England seems to have primarily followed the Cistercian eremitical tradition they are sometimes associated with (Aston 1993a), reflected at Stavordale and Woodspring, as well as the group in the Marches. However, the Victorines were clearly not averse to urban settlement and revenue, enjoyed at Bristol and Keynsham, and thus appear to embrace diverse circumstances, like the rest of the Augustinian congregation[19]. Within the region, the Victorines could be considered more notable for supplying two of its greatest urban houses than anything else.

3.2.7 Augustinian canonesses

The foundation for women at Lacock is perhaps the most unusual Augustinian house in the region. A small trickle of female Augustinian houses had been established throughout the twelfth century nationally, such as Clerkenwell (London) and Bristol (see below), although the overall numbers of Augustinian nunneries was very low: just eleven nationally by the end of the century. Lacock, established in 1229-30 (Rogers 1979: 10), was at the start of a second wave of foundations in the mid thirteenth century. Within the region, it was an extremely late foundation, yet became the fourth wealthiest house of Augustinian canonesses in the country at the Suppression. This was largely due to the aspirations and endowments of the founder, the countess of Salisbury, who was responsible for two important late-founded monasteries, Lacock Abbey and Hinton Charterhouse. The nunnery was dedicated to St Bernard, and the founder obtained letters of confraternity from the

[19] Haddock (1999) found little to distinguish the English Victorine houses from other Augustinian establishments.

Cistercian order for the house, and it may have been intended as a Cistercian establishment (Chew 1956: 303). However, a prohibition on further nunneries had been passed by the order in 1228. Lacock would have been one of the largest nunneries of the order nationally if it had been Cistercian[20] and in many respects it retained the revenue, situation and landed property one might expect from a middle rank male Cistercian house.

The other female foundation at Bristol St Mary Magdalen was a typical small Augustinian nunnery. Its order was often in doubt during the Middle Ages, a common problem experienced by minor female houses. It may be worth noting that its location on a major route out of the city, combined with its dedication which was commonly used for medieval hospitals (Gilchrist 1994: 187) may suggest that the nunnery was intended or had its origins as a hospital, although there is no evidence on this point.

[20] Only Tarrant (Dorset) and Catesby (Northamptonshire) approached Lacock in size, at £214 and £132 respectively; the other Cistercian nunneries were all worth considerably less than £100 at the Suppression

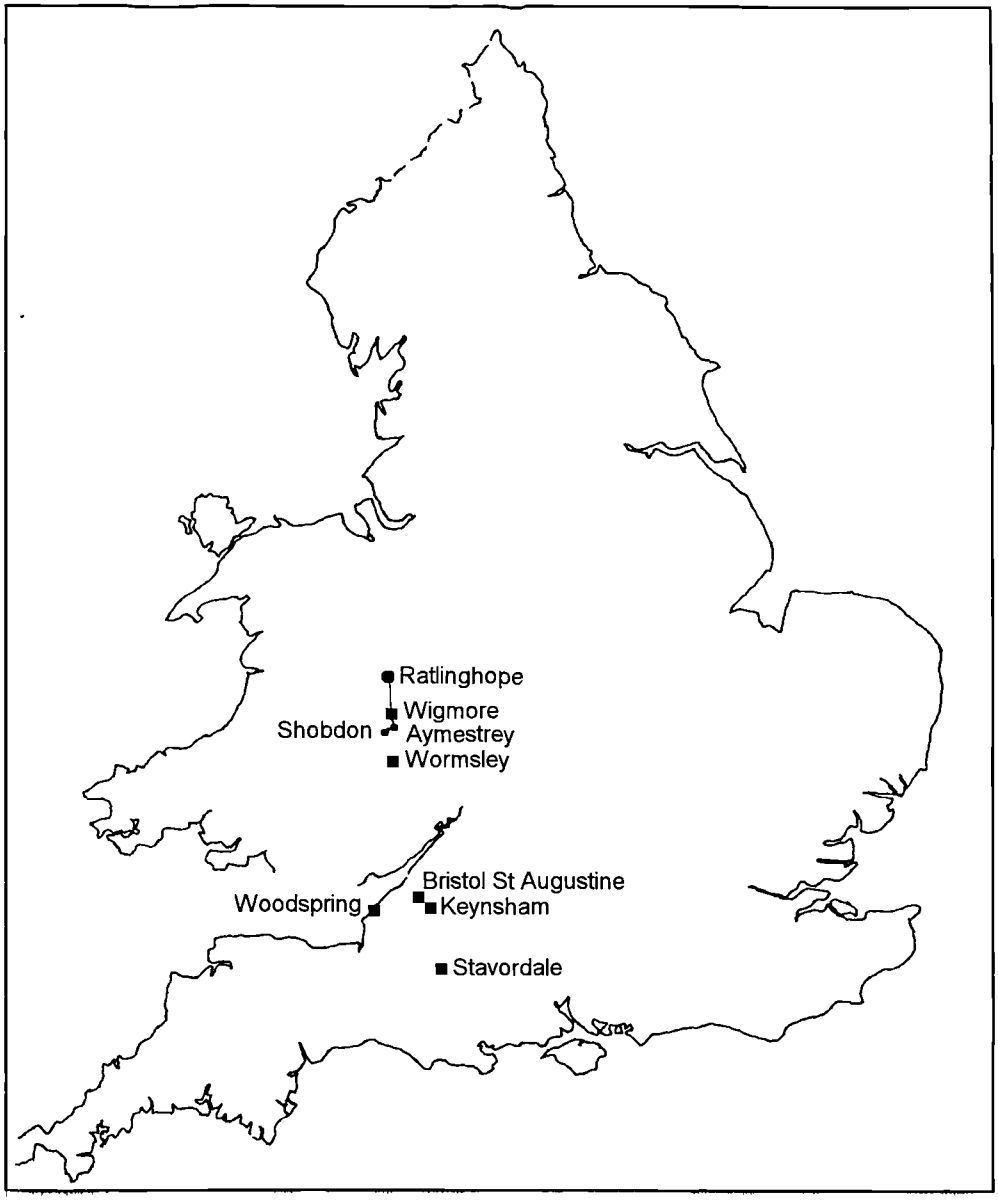

Figure 3.7 Distribution of Victorine houses nationally

3.3 The new orders

The new orders were the reformed religious communities of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, who 'broke away' from the existing monastic structure. Their adherence to strict rules governing property ownership, seclusion from secular life and return to the austerity of the early monastic rule is well documented. The arrival of this new monastic expression in England altered the pattern of foundation and the arrangement and economy of the landscape irrevocably. However, the impact that these spiritual and economic pioneers enjoyed was not uniform across the country, and this section will examine their role in shaping the development of the West Country, particularly in comparison with better-studied areas, such as Yorkshire (Donkin 1978; Burton 1999) or Wales (Williams 1990).

A host of orders and congregations sprang up across Europe at this period. The two largest reformed orders in Europe were the Cistercians and the Carthusians, and although they were very different in their approach to religious life, their insistence on isolation and absolute economic independence was very similar. Many were stimulated by the activities of one spiritual leader or individual house, such as St Norbert, who established the Premonstratensian order, or Robert of Arbrissel, whose example inspired the Fontevraultines.

Not all of these reformed orders reached England, some were represented by only a handful of houses (e.g. Bridgettines, Grandmontines), and few of them were present in the monastic landscape of the West Country (Figure 3.8). The Cistercians and Carthusians had just two houses each in the region (Stanley and Cleeve Abbeys; Hinton and Witham Priories), whilst the reformed orders of canons are represented by just one Gilbertine house at Marlborough[21]. The failing Saxon nunnery at Amesbury was also refounded as a house of the order of Fontevrault.

[21] See footnote 3 concerning the Premonstratensian cell at Charlton.

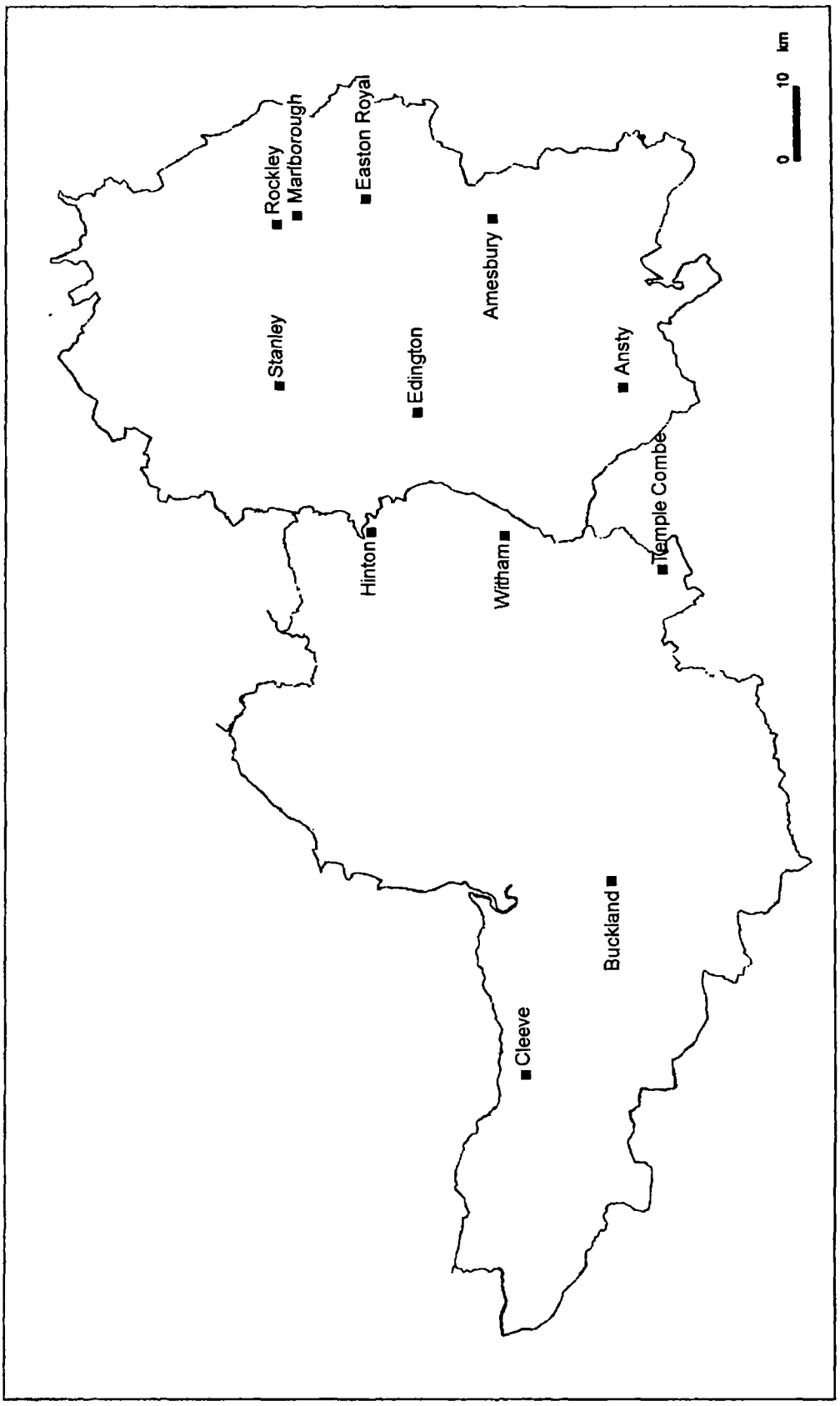

Figure 3.8 Distribution of new and military order houses in the region

3.3.1 Cistercian monks

The Cistercian order arrived in Britain in the late 1120s, the first foundations established at Waverley in Surrey and Tintern in the Wye Valley[22]. Its arrival had been slightly preceded by that of the Savigniacs, a separate congregation based on the mother house at Savigny who had established a house at Tulketh (Lancashire, later moved to Furness, Cumbria) in 1124[23]. The Savigniacs were incorporated into the Cistercian order in 1147: they appear to have been less centrally controlled, and indeed, less successful than the Cistercians (Burton 1994: 68).

About two-thirds of the English Cistercian family was established before legislation curtailing their expansion was passed in 1152 and St Bernard died in 1153. These houses were primarily located across the Midlands and north east, with a further group along the south Wales coast. Few further houses were founded until the revival of Cistercian fortunes in the early thirteenth century brought about by the royal foundation at Faringdon (Berkshire) later translated to Beaulieu (Hampshire), which stimulated a wave of endowment in the west, and a new group of establishments in mid and north Wales.

In contrast, the south and west generally had few early establishments[24]. Waverley, the earliest English Cistercian monastery, was responsible for the foundation of the community at Forde Abbey (Dorset) in 1136, whilst two Savigniac houses were founded directly from the motherhouse, one at Quarr on the Isle of Wight in 1132, another at Buckfast (Devon) in 1136. Kingswood (Gloucestershire) was essentially part of the Cistercian family west of the Severn estuary, being a daughterhouse of Tintern. Stanley was the last foundation in the area before the watershed of 1152,

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[22] Burton (1994: 63-77) provides a succinct account of the origins and spread to Britain of the Cistercians, Tironensians and Savigniacs. Hill (1968) provides a more detailed account of the development of the Cistercian order and its relationship with the Savigniacs.

[23] They were also preceded by the Tironensians, who established a house at St Dogmaels (Cardiganshire) as early as 1113. The order had no houses in the West Country, although Tiron Abbey itself owned one spiritual property in Wiltshire in 1291 (Caley 1802: 183).

[24] See Holdsworth (1989) for the foundation and development of Cistercian houses in Devon. As he points out, the Devon houses were very wealthy in national terms, although rather uncelebrated, and thus very different to the foundations of Somerset and Wiltshire. Their prominence may well be attributable to the lack of large pre-Conquest foundations in Devon, which significantly restricted the degree of patronage and resources available to the new order houses in the West Country.

and was endowed by Empress Matilda and her chamberlain Drogo in 1151, at Loxwell (Chettle & Kirby 1956: 269). Three years later, it was moved to a nearby site at Stanley. The foundation was made from Quarr Abbey, and Stanley's motherhouse was thus Savigniac in origin, although Stanley itself was founded after the orders merged.

Cleeve Abbey was one of the few (13) foundations made nationally between the ban of 1152 and the establishment of Faringdon in 1203. With very few exceptions- Robertsbridge (Sussex), Bindon (Dorset, daughter house of Forde) and Cleeve itself- these foundations were all in Wales and the north west. Cleeve was founded by William of Roumare in 1198 as a daughterhouse of Revesby (Lincolnshire), which had been founded by his grandfather, the earl of Lincoln fifty-five years previously (Robinson 1998: 85).

Thus, it can be seen that the Cistercian order did not enjoy the same impact in the south and west as it did in the north, Wales and the midlands. There were few foundations across Wessex generally, and they occurred fairly late within the national spread of the order. Stanley Abbey was one of the four southern houses that owed its origins to the Savigniac order and thus merits some attention, as little is known about it. Cleeve was unusual because of the date of its foundation, in a period when Cistercian popularity was at a low ebb nationally. Neither of the two West Country houses were particularly distinguished fiscally. The majority of Cistercian houses were valued between £100 and £300 at the Suppression (Figure 3.9), and Cleeve and Stanley, valued at £155 and £177 respectively, may be considered typical middle rank houses. Indeed, only one of the Wessex Cistercian houses was of a large size, that at Beaulieu in Hampshire.

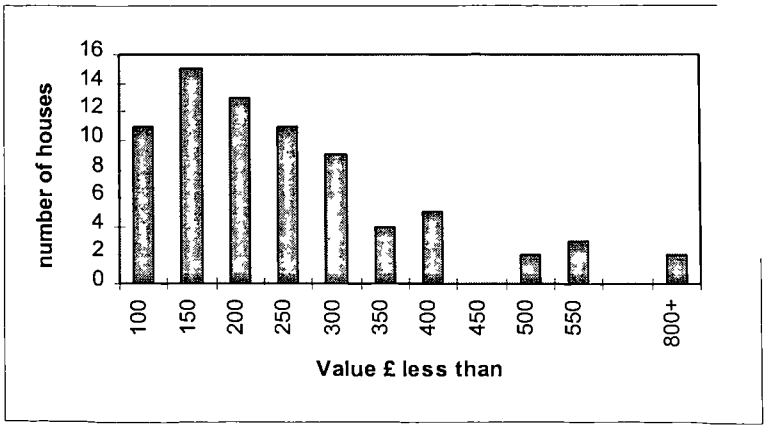

Figure 3.9 Value of Cistercian houses nationally in 1535

3.3.2 Carthusian monks

The West Country played a far more significant role in the development of the Carthusian order than the Cistercian. The order was eremitical in origin, rather than growing from reformed cenobitic communities, and was one of the most austere expressions of the regular monastic life in the Middle Ages. Although the order was founded as early as 1084 at La Grande Chartreuse, its spread was slow (Aston 1993b), and the first house in England was not established until 1178-9 at Witham in Somerset. Over forty years elapsed until the second English foundation, also in the West Country, initially at Hatherop (Gloucestershire) and later moved to Hinton *c.*1230. The two West Country charterhouses thus occupy a critical role in the adoption of the order in England. Indeed, they constituted the only two English charterhouses for a considerable period of time, because the order did not gain popularity here until the fourteenth century. In fact, they were never numerous: six houses were founded between 1343 and 1398 and the final and greatest English charterhouse was established at Sheen in 1414 by Henry V[25].

The early foundation of the two West Country charterhouses did not ensure them greater wealth than their sister houses. None of the houses of the order were poor-

[25] A forthcoming volume involving research by the former RCHME, English Heritage and the University of Bristol will provide a detailed historical and archaeological study of the Carthusian order in England. Thompson (1895) and (1930) provides detailed historical accounts of the order in England generally and the two Somerset houses in particular.

Coventry, the smallest was still valued at £131 at the Suppression- and the two south east houses were very wealthy- Sheen was valued at £800, London at £642. Hinton and Witham were both middle-rank examples, worth £248 and £215 respectively at the Suppression. Again, like the Cistercians, the impact of the Carthusians was very limited across Wessex as a whole- Hinton and Witham were, in fact, the only Carthusian houses in the entire region.

3.3.3 Gilbertine canons

Several of the twelfth-century reformed orders were instituted for both men and women, creating double houses reminiscent of the great foundations of the early Saxon period. Two such orders were represented in the West Country. The Gilbertines had been established by Gilbert of Sempringham in the early 1130s and was the only English monastic order, the majority of whose houses were located in Lincolnshire near the motherhouse[26]. The nuns and canons of the order followed the Rule of St Augustine and lived in double communities. However, this experiment did not prove particularly successful or fashionable for the Gilbertines, and many of the later houses were established for male canons only. Marlborough Priory, founded before 1199, was one of these male houses and was the most south-westerly member of the order. The majority of the double houses of the order were valued at over £100 at the Suppression, but the houses for male canons only were much less wealthy, the two earliest, Lincoln and Malton (Yorkshire) being exceptions to this. Marlborough, valued at £30, was typical of the 12 other male houses, which were all worth less than £70.

3.3.4 Fontevraultine nuns and canons

In contrast, the second double house in the region at Amesbury Priory was an unusual and wealthy establishment. The failing and scandalous Benedictine community was refounded in 1177 as a Fontevraultine house by Henry II (Pugh 1956: 243). This order was very different to the Gilbertines, and after the

[26] See Golding (1995) for a comprehensive historical account of the development of the order and its houses.

establishment of the motherhouse in 1096-7, it became an extremely popular and prominent order throughout Europe, helped by its patronage from the Plantagenet family (Thompson 1991). Three English Fontevraultine establishments had been created previously, at Kintbury (Berkshire, translated to Nuneaton, Warwickshire), Westwood (Worcestershire) and Grove (Bedfordshire)[27], but the final foundation at Amesbury, particularly favoured by the royal family, became the primary house of the order in England and was by far the wealthiest at the Suppression at £482.

The Fontevraultine houses did remain part of the Benedictine family of monastic houses, and the history of the order can be likened to that of the Cluniac in this sense. However, the eremitical and austere ambitions of the order's founder, Robert of Arbrissel, coupled with the concept of the double house, qualifies its inclusion as a new order. It was undoubtedly a part of the reforming movement and new religious ideals that emerged with such force at the start of the twelfth century.

3.4 The military orders

The spectrum of military orders founded across Europe in the Middle Ages was represented in England primarily by the Knights of the Temple of Solomon (Templars) and the Knights of St John of Jerusalem (Hospitallers). The crusades in the early twelfth century generated a particular set of historical circumstances which resulted in the foundation of these new monastic orders. Their role was to protect pilgrims in the Holy Land, to fight there as well, and to raise revenue in the west to fund these holy wars. The establishment of the military order houses was therefore directed at the accumulation and administration of resources to a far greater degree than the monasteries previously discussed, and the pattern of their patronage and foundation was different.

The warrior-monks- monastic orders of prayer and contemplation, bound by their constitutions to take part in secular life to a degree which included international finance and aggression- have traditionally been viewed as the fringe of regular monasticism. However, their study has undergone review in recent years, along with

[27] Grove was an alien cell dependent on Fontevrault itself, and resembled a secular manor in layout (Andrews et al 1981)

other religious communities often viewed as marginal and ill-defined[28]. The complexity of their rule, with its attention to conventual, as well as fighting, life (Barber 1994: 182), demonstrates a clear concern with spiritual matters. However, in their physical remains and emphasis on the acquisition and administration of estates, military houses bear a strong similarity to the alien priories more than any other religious group, and operated in what might be considered the liminal area between the secular and monastic world. Each order was divided into a administrative hierarchy based on the basic economic units of a preceptory or commandery[29]. The establishment and maintenance of these units appears to have changed as each order developed and acquired new properties, something demonstrated in the West Country.

3.4.1 Templar and Hospitaller houses

The Templars had few preceptories in the south west generally, their stronghold in England being primarily in the north and east, centred on large establishments such as Temple Bruer (Lincolnshire) and Cressing (Essex). Bristol appears to have been the first Templar establishment in the region, the growing settlement being a suitable choice for an order concerned with commerce and the movement of revenue (Figure 3.8). They were granted an area south of the river from the town by the earl of Gloucester in the early twelfth century (Lees 1935: 58), and it became known as the Temple Fee, a separate and very wealthy district with a degree of autonomy from Bristol itself (Good 1992).

However, a preceptory was established at Combe in Somerset after 1185, and this appears to have become the central foundation for the region, and the house at Bristol fell under its administration after this date (Lees 1935: cxxxii). Earlier, *c.*1155, a small preceptory had also been established at Rockley in Wiltshire (ibid.), and these two houses represented the order in the south west, apart from one small addition in Cornwall at Temple. Combe appears to have been the dominant establishment, valued at sixty marks in 1338, whereas Rockley was valued at just

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[28] Gilchrist addressed the archaeology of the military orders in her (1995) study *Contemplation and Action: the other monasticism.* Barber (1994) provides a recent and comprehensive historical account of the Templars.

nineteen marks at the same date (Larking 1856: 186; 187). This places Combe as one of the nine preceptories which appear to have been the wealthiest centres for the order and were well distributed across the country: Combe's nearest wealthy neighbours were Sandford (Oxfordshire) and Guiting (Gloucestershire).

The Hospitallers had just one 'normal' preceptory in the region prior to the fourteenth century, at Ansty in southern Wiltshire. However, in c.1180, Henry II granted the failed Augustinian monastery at Buckland to the order, for the purpose of establishing a female house. No other independent female Hospitaller houses existed in England [30], but it appears that there were sufficient female adherents of the order that some formalization of their position was necessary. The situation is reminiscent of the early Cistercian nunneries, where women were clearly attracted to the monastic life in this form, but there were few provisions and some reluctance to accommodate them (Gilchrist 1994: 68). Women from several preceptories around the country, such as Carbrooke (Norfolk) and Swinfield (Kent), were placed at the new Somerset foundation, and even in 1535, Buckland was still receiving pensions from these houses. Buckland thus represents a unique house in British monasticism, being the only double house of the Hospitaller order, and one that sadly little is known about.

At the Dissolution of the Templar order in 1308 (see below), the Hospitallers were granted a considerable amount of their property, and retained the establishment at Combe as a preceptory. It appears that the house at Bristol was already subordinate to Combe, and the other small house at Rockley was placed under Hospitaller jurisdiction as well.

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[29] See Barber (1994: 229-99) for the Europe-wide structure of the Templar order.

[30] The house at Aconbury (Herefordshire) was intended as a hospital and female house attached to a nearby preceptory, was soon after converted to the Augustinian order (Knowles & Hadcock 1971: 278)

3.4.2 Trinitarian houses

The Trinitarian house at Easton Royal was one of ten houses of the order in England, which developed with three guiding principles[31]. Its income was to be divided to support its brethren, to provide succour for pilgrims and travellers, and finally to raise revenue to ransom captives in the Holy Land. The Trinitarians are difficult to categorise, like many of the small houses and orders of the Middle Ages. The brethren used the rule of St Augustine, like the Hospitallers, and were not itinerant or mendicant like the friars, with whom they are often confused (Chettle 1946). They were not however simply members of the family of Augustinian canons, and shared some characteristics with the new reformed orders of the twelfth century. The inclusion of Easton Royal with the military houses of the region recognizes that the Trinitarians sprang from the same historical stimulus as these orders, and entertained aspirations beyond those of an ordinary hospital or hostel, although they were not a full military order. Indeed, they are often likened to the Canons of the Holy Sepulchre, another small group which originated in the Holy Land and who became part of the Augustinian family (Gray 1993).

The establishment at Easton Royal was a hospital for several years before its conversion to a Trinitarian house in 1251. All of the houses of the order were established between 1224 and 1313, and all were small in size, containing less than ten individuals. The house at Hounslow (Essex) was the wealthiest at £72, whilst Easton was worth £42, making it similar in value to the small post-Conquest Benedictine monasteries in the region.

3.5 The Bonshommes

The priory established at Edington in 1358 was the final regular monastic house to be established in the West Country and provides its most unusual establishment. The foundation of full, regular monastic houses as an expression of piety in the region was long over: Lacock Abbey and Hinton Charterhouse had been the last two

major houses founded, nearly 140 years before, and only the Trinitarian hospital at Easton Royal had been founded since then, in the mid thirteenth century (Figure 3.10). Even the endowment of the friars in the region was over, and hospitals were the only new religious establishments being contemplated[32]. Yet Edington Priory was founded in 1358 and became the seventh wealthiest monastic house in the region, only the greatest of the ancient Benedictine houses enjoying greater revenue in 1535.

The exact nature of the community at Edington has been the subject of much debate[33], mainly because the term used to refer to the brethren there- 'Bonshommes'- was used of many religious groups in the Middle Ages. At Edington, the community followed the rule of St Augustine and was under the charge of a rector, rather than prior or abbot, and can thus be considered a house of Augustinian canons, albeit an independent and unusual one. Edington had a patronal link to another independent house at Ashridge (Hertfordshire), refounded by Edward the Black Prince, who was credited by Leland as a driving force behind the establishment of the Wiltshire house as well, persuading William of Edington to 'change the ministers of his college into Bonshommes' (Toulmin-Smith 1909: 4, 25)[34]. It seems that Edington was a unique house, dependent heavily on the vision of its founder rather than fitting the pattern of an established monastic order.

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[31] Gray (1993) provides an introduction to the order and useful archaeological summaries of the evidence for each English house in her excavation report of Thelsford Priory (Warwickshire).

[32] The foundation of friaries and hospitals has not been included in this thesis. It has not been possible to include them satisfactorily within the space limits allowed.

[33] Primarily Brakspear (1933), Chettle (1944), Chambers (1979). See Appendix 2 for fuller discussion.

[34] See previous footnote for literature which discusses the implications and validity of Leland's passage about the Bonshommes.

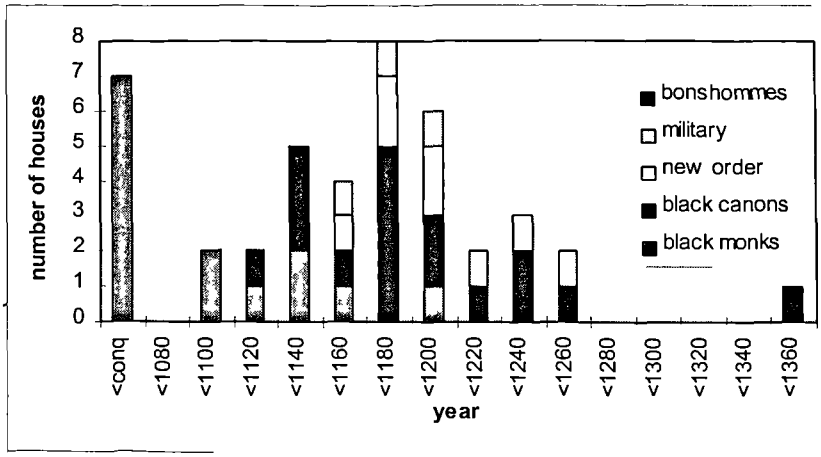

Figure 3.10 Foundation chronology for the region

3.6 The Suppression

Before the sixteenth century, some suppression and closure had occurred nationally. A considerable number of Augustinian houses had been suppressed before Henry VIII's attempt (see section 3.2.5), or failed and became dependent communities. Similarly, the concept of the alien priory had also come to an end in preceding centuries, alien establishments either becoming denizen and continuing as English houses, as did Montacute and Monkton Farleigh, or being suppressed and their property granted elsewhere from 1414 onwards (Morgan 1942). Somerset and Wiltshire were typical in that a substantial amount of alien property was granted to other monastic and collegiate establishments, allowing it to be traced at the Suppression within the possessions of other houses. The Templar order had similarly been suppressed at the start of the fourteenth century, a victim as much of international politics as moral decline (Forey 1992). Their property passed largely to the Hospitallers and can thus often be traced with the history of that order.

The final Suppression of the Monasteries began with the Act for the Dissolution of the Smaller Monasteries in 1536 to close those worth less than £200 per annum, as assessed in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535. Half of the monasteries in the region fell below this figure (see Chapter 7) and were accordingly suppressed: this included both Cistercian houses and all of the post-Conquest female foundations. The Gilbertines obtained special dispensation from this first Act, and thus even the

smallest houses of the order, like Marlborough, survived it. A series of 'voluntary' surrenders were received by visiting commissioners across the region in 1538 and 1539 (Bettey 1989: 78)[35], which closed the remaining houses in the region worth more than £200.

Few houses posed any resistance to the process apart from Hinton Charterhouse, and Glastonbury Abbey. The last abbot was executed famously on Glastonbury Tor at the end of 1539, and the abbey was one of last houses in the region to fall. More interestingly perhaps, the documentary evidence relating to Hinton gives a flavour of the importance of the Somerset charterhouses within the region. The reluctance of the prior to submit to the closure (Bettey 1989: 88) suggests a spirited and continuing commitment to the monastic ideal, something echoed by the organization of their estates in 1535 (see Chapter 8).

3.7 Conclusion

The foundation and distribution of monastic houses in the region in the post-Conquest period broadly reflects the pattern observable nationally, although it has distinct characteristics. The foundation of houses began in the mid twelfth century, reaching a peak before the end of the century and tailing away rapidly afterwards. The lack of foundations in the immediate post-Conquest period and early twelfth century appears to have been bridged by substantial donations to French motherhouses. By the early thirteenth century, the drive to found regular monasteries was largely over, replaced by the patronage of friaries and hospitals. What is noticeable about the monastic character of the region is the small number of post-Conquest Benedictine and new order houses. The few Benedictine houses that were established were small in size, and none of the new order houses were particularly distinguished fiscally either. This is probably partially attributable to the wealth and dominance of the pre-Conquest Benedictine foundations in the region: although not numerous, they held a substantial proportion of the land in Somerset and Wiltshire between them. The bulk of post-Conquest patronage was instead devoted to the Augustinian houses; a number of large foundations and many more small ones

[35] Bettey (1989) provides a vivid and detailed account of the process of Suppression in the region, including a chronology of surrender.

across the region were Augustinian. The number of these houses that were Victorine houses makes the region unusual in its range of monastic foundations, as does the existence of the Hospitaller double house at Buckland, the extremely late foundation at Edington and Amesbury, head of the Fontevraultine order in England.

4. MONASTERIES: THE PHYSICAL SETTING

4.1 Introduction

Each monastery had a unique character based on the type of community it housed, the layout of its buildings and the site upon which it was built. The selection of each was the result of a combination of historical factors, and the foundation process which generated each establishment is one of the most enigmatic features of the study of monastic houses. There are several examples where the circumstances of foundation are recorded in the documentary history of the house, and the interaction between the patron, order and individual community of monks is known. It was recorded, for example, that the exact site of Lacock Abbey was revealed to the founder in a dream (Rogers 1979). More pragmatically, the statutes of the Cistercian order laid out rules about the way in which communities were to be founded and potential sites vetted by monastic superiors (Burton 1998: 132)[1]. However, for the majority of houses, there is little information about how the final site and buildings were selected.

Instead, evidence for the result of the process survives, and the monastic buildings themselves can be examined within their landscape context for information about the foundation and the circumstances under which the site was chosen. This chapter examines the physical and historical evidence for the monastic houses in the region, and discusses some of the issues concerning the location of the monastic complex itself. It begins by looking at the topography and site of the houses, and discusses the factors that influenced the choice of site and the trends in location that can be observed. Following on from this, the evidence for the claustral buildings in the region is presented, and issues concerning their construction and layout considered.

[1] Norton & Park (1986: 315-93) provide a convenient translated list of statutes. The full text of the statutes can be found in Louvain (1933-41).

4.2 Siting and location

4.2.1 Town, castle, monastery: Norman planning

The three-fold development of town, castle and monastery after the Norman Conquest has been noted by many authors- most specifically in an article published on the subject by Thompson (1986). Indeed it can be observed today at many settlements with surviving medieval remains, and is primarily associated with houses of black monks and canons, such as Kenilworth (Augustinian, Warwickshire) or Thetford (Cluniac, Norfolk). The arrangement is characterized by the existence of a castle, combined with the development of a planned town with recognizably structured layout. The foundation of the monastic house is often the final element, usually in the immediate vicinity of both castle and town (ibid.).

These triple establishments can be dated to the twelfth century or earlier in general, but the exact chronology of development of the three elements, and the role of the monastic house in this, is often far from certain, because of the imprecise dates available from documents and lack of archaeological investigation (ibid.). In a few cases, all three elements can be demonstrated to be contemporary and the work of one patron and therefore represent a single idea. In some, the monastic foundation was responsible for stimulating the growth of a settlement. In others, it was an existing settlement that attracted the foundation of the monastery. Whatever the process, the abundant association of post-Conquest monastic foundations with towns and castles demonstrates that urban environments were considered suitable for religious communities, similarly to the Saxon period (see Chapter 2).

Both Dunster and Stogursey Priories were founded in association with post-Conquest towns and castles (Figure 4.1), in the lordship of powerful Norman families. The manor of Stogursey was owned by William de Falaise at Domesday (Thorn & Thorn 1980: [27,1]), who co-founded the priory with his wife *c.*1100-1107. The castle was in existence by 1090 (Aston & Leech 1977: 131), and so was presumably the work of the same patron, but the date of the town layout is unknown. It may have been 'a speculative venture' laid out later than the priory by the de

Courcy family, from whom it takes its name (ibid.), and who succeeded to the manor by marriage into the de Falaise line (Tremlett & Blakiston 1949). Similarly at Dunster, it is the dating of the settlement plan that presents a problem. The castle was in the possession of the Mohun family by Domesday (Thorn & Thorn 1980: [25,2]), who granted the parish church to Bath to found a priory in 1090 (SRS 1894). They were probably responsible for the laying out of a new town at the centre of the Barony, but its date is uncertain (Aston & Leech 1977: 45). In both cases therefore, the castle pre-dated the priory, but the exact relationship between the monastery and planned town is unclear.

Conversely, at Montacute, the priory was founded in an established town, next to the castle (Figure 4.1). Robert, the first count of Mortain and his son, William, were responsible for the foundation of all three in the late eleventh century, on the site of earlier settlement (Scott Holmes 1911: 111). Although Robert has been claimed as founder of the priory, it seems most likely that William was in fact the founder: the castle was established by the first count, on land obtained from Athelney Abbey, and the town was established at some point, before both were granted away to the Cluniac order by the second count (SRS Council 1894: 119). Unlike Dunster and Stogursey, the priory thus became lord of the borough.

Well before the Norman Conquest, Taunton was a town under the ecclesiastical lordship of the bishops of Winchester (Thorn & Thorn 1980: [2,1]). The existing Saxon minster was refounded as a house of Augustinian canons in the 1120s by Bishop Giffard, who also began work on the castle (Aston & Leech 1977: 136). His successor, Bishop Henry de Blois, continued both developments, moving the priory to a site outside the walls of the settlement (Bush 1984: 104), for which he had gained borough status and was undertaking major redevelopment (Figure 4.1). All three elements can thus be seen as contemporary ongoing projects by the two bishops[2].

[2] Thompson's (1986: 306) assertion that Taunton represents one of the few cases where the foundation of the priory pre-dates the castle is based on 1120 as an initial date for the priory and 1136 for the castle. However, work to fortify the area occupied by the castle began earlier than the erection of the stone keep in 1136 (Aston & Leech 1977: 131), and must thus be regarded as contemporary with and not later than the priory.

In each case, the establishment of the religious house was a product of the relationship between the lord of the manor and the settlement. The castle represented the first phase of construction, closely followed or contemporary with the foundation of the monastic house, and in each example except Montacute, they were the work of the same patron. The date of the planned settlement relating to them is more difficult to establish. At Montacute, the existing borough was granted to the priory at its foundation and the topography of the town suggests that the priory precinct was laid out at the southern end of the main street. It probably utilised the existing church, which would have lain in this focal position. Similarly, the monastic church at Stogursey lay at the end of the main street of burgage plots, and the grant of the church at the foundation of the priory (Tremlett & Blakiston 1949: 1) suggests it was already an integral part of a settlement. At Dunster, the earliest settlement appears to have been at the foot of the castle mound (Aston & Leech 1977: 45). The priory was thus laid out to the north of the existing church, with later burgage plots spread around it to the east.

Two further monastic houses in suburban locations can be examined in the light of this triple-foundation concept. Unlike the previous examples, St James Priory was established away from an existing settlement, outside the town walls at Bristol by Robert, earl of Gloucester in *c.*1137 (Figure 4.2). He was responsible for the complete rebuilding of the castle to the east of the town, and probably for extending the town defences to the north (Lobel 1975: 4). The laying out of new settlement in the twelfth century, between the castle and priory, for which the latter performed as a parochial church, is associated with either Robert or his son William (ibid.: 5). Thus although a far less coherent unit topographically than the other examples, all three elements were founded by one patronal family, as a move to extend the town northwards and strengthen its defences, providing pastoral care through the monastic foundation.

By the time that the small house of Gilbertine canons at Marlborough was founded at the end of the twelfth century, both castle and settlement were well established. The priory lay to the south of the royal borough and cannot be considered part of the urban development of the town in the same way as the previous examples. However, the castle became a popular royal residence at the start of the thirteenth century, and the priory benefited greatly from resulting royal patronage. A link

between the two was established later in the century when canons from the priory were used to serve the castle chapel (Golding 1995: 226) and thus the development of the priory can be seen as strongly dependent on its suburban location near the castle.

St Augustine's and St Mary Magdalen's were founded in suburban locations with respect to the growing town of Bristol. St Augustine's was founded by Robert FitzHarding in his manor of Billeswick adjoining the west of the town (Figure 4.2). St Mary Magdalen's was founded by his wife, Eva, near St Michael's church outside the north gate, another church that probably owed its origins to town planning by the earls of Gloucester (Lobel 1975: 5). Similarly, both Bruton and Keynsham Abbeys were in close proximity to, and were endowed with, prominent Saxon settlements, Bruton by the Mohuns who also founded Dunster Priory and Keynsham as a second, and somewhat more extravagant venture, by the earls of Gloucester. The development of both towns is poorly documented and there is little archaeological evidence (Aston & Leech 1977: 20; Leech 1975: 35), but both show evidence of post-Conquest replanning of the Saxon towns, which may well have been sponsored by the monastic house.

Overall, these cases mean that approximately half of the houses founded in the region after the Conquest can be considered to have existed in urban or suburban situations. However, the settlement history is often ambiguous, and the degree to which the location that the monastery was founded in could already be considered urban is unclear. Mostly, the houses discussed were founded within the context of existing settlements or boroughs of some sort, but contributed to their ongoing development and increasing urban status. Dunster, Montacute, Keynsham and Bruton are all examples of this. In contrast, the three Bristol houses were founded away from the existing town, but played a fundamental role in stimulating new development. In both cases, the association of urban development and monastic houses is clear, with patrons either establishing monastic houses within existing boroughs, or placing them within the ambit of settlements ripe for development.

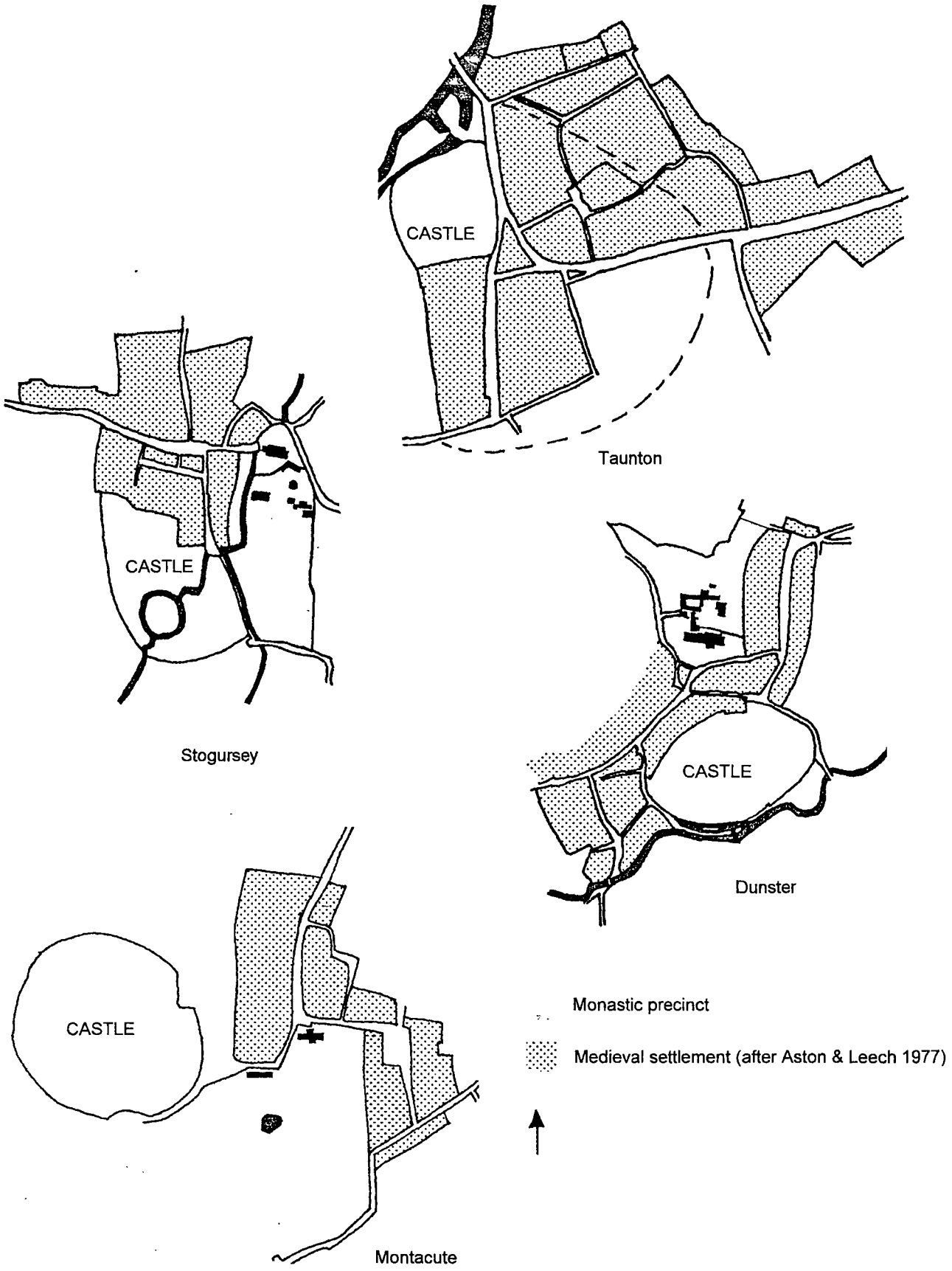

Figure 4.1 Monasteries founded in association with twelfth-century towns and castles

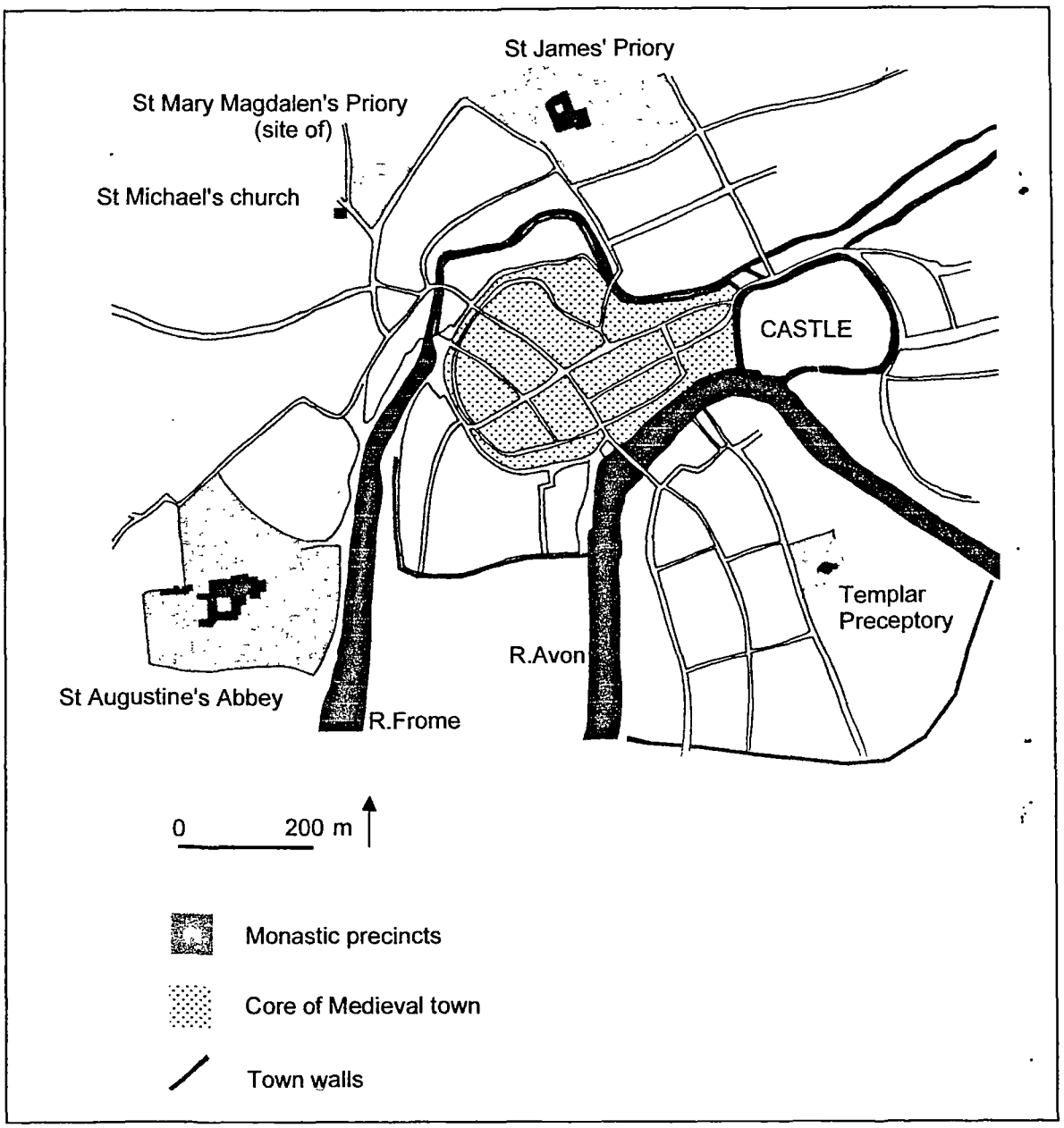

Figure 4.2 Monasteries founded in association with the town of Bristol

4.2.2 Spiritual traditions and the black canons

Unlike the other reformed orders, whose highly centralised structure and formalized statutes imposed a strong uniformity of ideas and construction on their members, the Augustinian congregation allowed a great degree of expression for individual communities and their patrons. Thus the canons enjoyed the most varied range of sites of any of the monastic groups, and were adaptable to many situations. Some houses, such as Llanthony I, situated in the Black Mountains of Wales, clearly aspired to the eremitical traditions of the new orders, whilst others, like Keynsham or Bruton discussed above, were situated in urban locations and performed some pastoral functions.

One trend than can be observed through this variety is continuity: a substantial number of monastic foundations nationally was characterized by the existence of a previous religious institution or tradition at the site upon which they were located. Indeed, Robinson estimated that over one third of all Augustinian foundations nationally were preceded by a secular college or minster, hospital, hermitage or other religious institution (Robinson 1980: 35)[3]. In the West Country, there are clear indications that several of the Augustinian abbeys and priories were located on sites that may have been pre-Conquest religious institutions. At Taunton, the existence of a minster and collegiate establishment is documented from the tenth century (Leach 1984: 29) and its location has been suggested by the discovery of a large cemetery (ibid.) in the fortified central area of the Saxon settlement (Figure 4.1). The Augustinian priory was a direct refoundation of this establishment by the bishops of Winchester and it can be proposed that it was on the same site before its translation in the twelfth century outside the walls of the town, although concrete archaeological evidence is lacking.

Likewise, Keynsham was an important centre of a royal hundred in the Saxon period, and there is convincing historical evidence for a minster in the town by the tenth century (Prosser 1995). Excavations on the medieval abbey site have revealed a number of Saxon sculpted stonework fragments and other artefacts (Lowe 1987)

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[3] Robinson would revise this estimate now to include a higher number of foundations (*pers.comm.*).

which reinforce the idea that the Augustinian abbey was in fact founded on the site of, or near to, a previous minster church. In addition, the alignment of the medieval abbey with the thirteenth-century parish church of St John the Baptist, which lay in the corner of the monastic precinct, may have replaced or extended an earlier arrangement of pre-Conquest churches on an east-west axis, demonstrated at several minster and monastic sites, most famously Glastonbury and St Augustine's, Canterbury.

Similarly the foundation of Bruton Abbey, as discussed above, probably reflects the continuation of the minster church of the Saxon settlement. Indeed, Aldhelm himself is reputed to have founded a church there as early as the seventh century (Passmore 1996: 11)[4], and the settlement is known to have had a mint in the late tenth century (Aston & Leech 1977: 20), suggesting its prominence in this period. Uncertainty exists concerning the number of churches at the site[5], but references to a church of SS Peter and Paul in the fourteenth century (ibid.), reflecting the dedication of Aldhelm's church, may preserve the tradition of an early minster church.

The uncertain chronology of the early years of St Augustine's in Bristol has made its foundation the subject of considerable debate, particularly with respect to the parish church of St Augustine the Less, which stood to the east of the Abbey church[6]. Historical accounts of the foundation of the abbey are unclear about its exact date, and it has been suggested that St Augustine the Less was built as, or temporarily used as, the first monastic church. Walker has argued convincingly that the uncertainty in foundation dates is due to the rate of development of the overall building scheme, rather than more than one foundation date (1998: xxii), and that St Augustine the Less was not built *per se* as a monastic church. Nevertheless, the twelfth-century structure excavated at St Augustine the Less may have been used as a temporary monastic church during the construction of the abbey proper (Boore 1985: 25).

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[4] Leland suggested an eleventh-century monastery at Bruton (Passmore 1996: 11), but this may well have been a misinterpretation of a minster church.
[5] Aston & Leech (1979: 20) argue convincingly for a lost monastic church, the parish church being architecturally unsuitable to serve both monastery and parish.
[6] e.g. Walker 1998, Sabin 1956, Dickinson 1976

However, the possibility remains that the site was the location of even earlier religious activity. It has traditionally been associated with St Augustine himself, as well as the obscure St Jordan who was claimed as Augustine's colleague or disciple (Dickinson 1976). Archaeological and historical evidence date a burial ground at St Augustine the Less to the late eleventh century (Boore 1985: 25), suggesting that religious activity was indeed taking place there before the foundation of the abbey and the first excavated structures. The discovery in the cathedral in the nineteenth century of a relief sculpture depicting the Harrowing of Hell and dating to the middle of the eleventh century[7] does suggest a substantial pre-Conquest structure in the vicinity. Walker has thus suggested that there may have been an early, perhaps pre-Conquest, parish church at the site, although evidence for the parish itself does not date before the mid twelfth century (1998: xviii). For different reasons, Dickinson believed that the site had significance in the pre-Conquest period, based on the legends of the two saints and later medieval references that imply a 'special status' for the abbey (1976).

Although the foundation of St Augustine's Abbey by Robert FitzHarding does appear as a new venture in historical sources, there may have been a religious presence at the site already. If so, the physical relationship between the two churches, although not precise as preserved in the later structures, might indicate an early axial arrangement of two structures, which would suggest a Saxon site of some significance, whether associated with SS Augustine and Jordan or not[8].

The foundation at Ivychurch was founded in close proximity to the royal palace and park at Clarendon, and provided canons to serve the palace chapel (James & Robinson 1988: 4). It may have represented the refoundation of an earlier minster. Ivychurch was located within the manor of Alderbury, and at Domesday, the church there is listed as holding an eight hide estate, five of which were in the hands of Alfward the Priest, two in the hands of Osbern the Priest, and the remaining hide had never paid tax [19,2;3]. Alderbury was a hundredal centre and both this and the existence of geld-exempt inland suggest it was a minster church (Faith 1997: 48). In addition, it has been suggested that female personal names compounded with the

[7] See Walker (1998: xx) for a recent collation of opinion concerning the dating of the relief. A date in the decades immediately before the Conquest appears most likely.

suffix *-burh*, as at Alderbury, may denote the double houses common in the seventh and eighth centuries (Stenton 1943: 8). When this is combined with Blair's comments that early minsters may have been served by double communities (1987: 88), the possibility of Ivychurch Priory being the descendent of an early double minster, royally instigated, is a strong one[9].

The houses discussed above were all Augustinian foundations of the twelfth century, and fairly substantial establishments. In contrast, there is a second group of later Augustinian foundations associated with eremitical and isolated sites. They were all small and relatively poorly documented houses, so little can be ascertained about their history, but the possibility of an earlier hermitage at the sites is strong on topographic grounds. The strong association of Augustinian priories nationally with hermitages probably reflects the suitability of the flexible rule for communities that were informal and very small in origin (Herbert 1985) [10]. The only documented hermit that preceded a monastery was at Burtle Priory[11], which was founded before the late twelfth century on the site of a hermitage at *Sprawlesmede* (Watkin 1947: 117)[12]. Burtle Farm marks the probable site of the priory on a small island in the Somerset Levels south of the River Brue, and is still isolated today.

The history of several other foundations suggests that an eremitical origin may have been likely, although undocumented. The small priory on Steep Holm emerges in the historical record as an Augustinian priory in the late twelfth century, similarly to Burtle, but may represent the continuation of a much earlier establishment, with its roots in an eremitical monastic tradition. Archaeological and historical evidence points to a tradition of religious life on the islands of the Severn Estuary[13], and the medieval priory at Steep Holm was probably the culmination of many centuries of eremitical life on the island.

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[8] The earliest burials on the site were on a different alignment to the later church, perhaps suggesting an earlier structure on a different alignment (Boore 1985: 25).
[9] The priory is located at some distance from the settlement at Alderbury, so any continuity is likely to be of institution rather than site.
[10] See Herbert (1985) on the phenomenon of Augustinian priories created from hermitages in the Middle Ages. The West Country group fits well with her conclusions about the process in England, which was largely achieved by low status patrons and has left little documentation, often obscuring these eremitic origins.
[11] Aston (pers. comm.) has catalogued c.30 documented medieval hermits in Somerset.
[12] See Appendix 2 for references.
[13] See Chapter 2 for discussion of the evidence.

The obscure early history of Longleat Priory in Selwood Forest in Wiltshire may hide a similar eremitical or religious association for the site (Figure 4.3). The Cirencester cartulary records a twelfth-century community of unknown character in the vicinity, which soon disappeared, although its site is traditionally associated with St Algar's farm, later held by Cirencester (Kirby 1956: 302). There are medieval remains of a chapel and holy well there. Longleat Priory, dedicated to St Radegund, was in existence by 1235, but its origins and relationship to the earlier foundation are unknown[14]. The area was within the remote wooded forest of Selwood in the Middle Ages, and the possibility that one or both communities owed their foundation to a hermitage or holy site is strong, given their topographical location and religious dedications.

The Victorine order was sometimes associated with eremitical locations and way of life (see Chapter 3). The two smaller houses of the order in the region, Woodspring and Stavordale Priories, can be considered in this category. Documentary sources suggest that the first establishment at Woodspring was a chapel (Scott Holmes 1911: 144), and although pure speculation, it could be suggested that this was an eremitical chapel, formalized by the introduction of Victorine canons. It is the very isolated coastal situation of the site, coupled with the existence of the eponymous spring, that suggests there may have been a specific reason for foundation there, whether because it had some existing religious significance, or purely that the priory was an attempt at austerity after the fashion of the new orders.

Both Stavordale and Maiden Bradley were, like Longleat, established within the forest of Selwood (McGarvie 1978) (Figure 4.3). Stavordale was a Victorine house, and the site may have been chosen for its relatively remote location. Maiden Bradley, in contrast, was established on the site of a leper hospital. The earthworks on the site suggest that the Augustinian foundation was in fact laid out adjacent to the hospital, which continued under the administration of the priory until the incidence of leprosy declined and need for the hospital was thus reduced.

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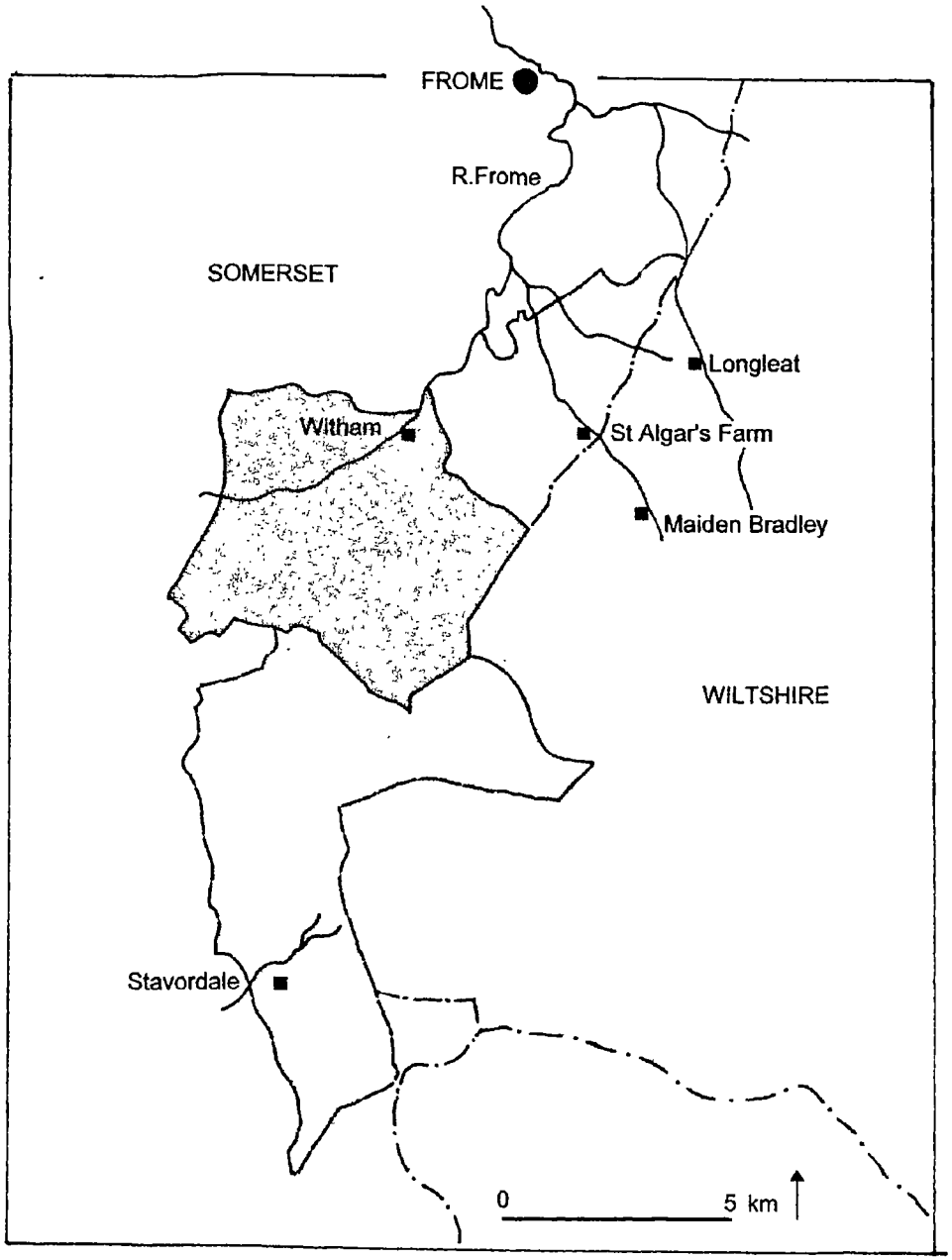
[14] The proximity of two sites with unusual dedications is notable. St Radegund was a sixth-century Frankish queen who later became a nun at Poitiers: Gregory of Tours was one of her admirers and supporters (Farmer 1978: 339). Algar is an obscure dedication that might be equated with Elgiva, mother of King Edgar, who was a nun and died at Shaftesbury in 944, where a cult to her was established (ibid.: 128). If so, it might suggest early origins for the site.

4.2.3 Finding the desert: the new orders

The reformed orders of the twelfth century are famed for their insistence on locations that were remote from secular settlement and replicated the desert wildernesses favoured by the earliest hermit fathers (Burton 1998: 25). In Britain, it is the early surviving .Cistercian foundations in Yorkshire, such as Fountains or Rievaulx, and Wales, like Tintern, that have become synonymous with the ideal of isolation and self-sufficiency. However, the concept was not confined to the Cistercians alone, and it was a fundamental principle of the early Carthusian houses of Continental Europe (Aston 1990: 39). It was also a recurring theme in the siting of many of the houses of canons, particularly the Premonstratensians but also many of the Augustinian houses, as discussed above.

The West Country was a densely settled region in the twelfth century, in terms of both the extent of monastic estates and secular communities, and this is reflected by the paucity of new order foundations. Both Cistercian houses, however, did manage to achieve a considerable degree of isolation in their locations. Stanley Abbey was founded within the northern limit of the royal forest of Chippenham (Figure 4.4), an area of sparser settlement at Domesday than surrounding areas (Grant 1959: 446). Although both the original site at Loxwell and final one at Stanley (see below), were within 5 km of the of the towns at Chippenham and Calne, they lay in a wooded, hilly area that would have provided seclusion. The site at Stanley was in a small river valley that appears to have been surrounded by woodland, marsh and pasture in the Middle Ages (Brown 1996: 3).



county boundary

Liberty of Witham

Selwood Forest (13th century)

Forest boundaries after McGarvie (1978)

Figure 4.3 Monasteries founded in the forest of Selwood

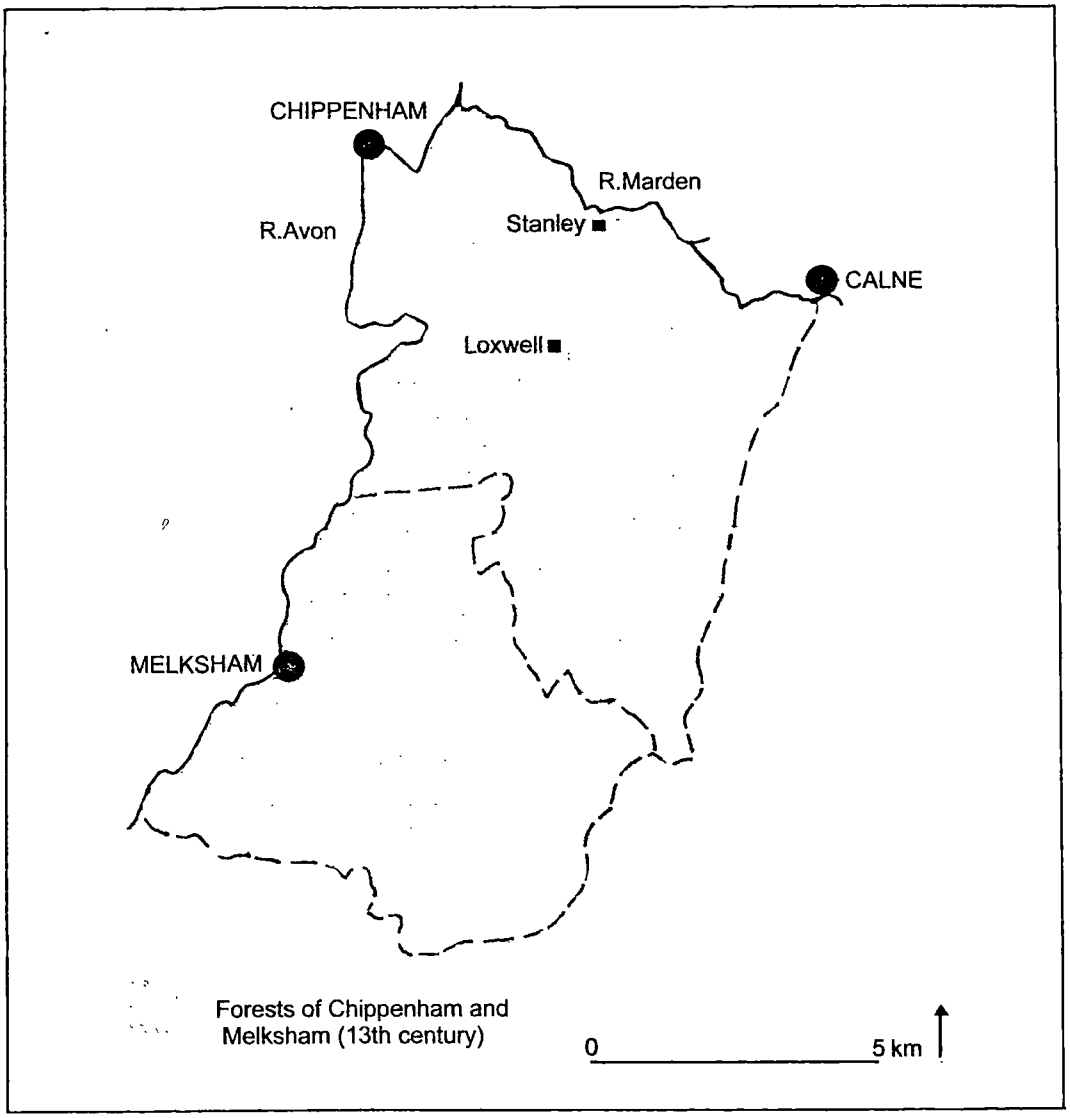


Figure 4.4 The location of Stanley Abbey

Cleeve Abbey was situated in the coastal area of Western Somerset, a remote but settled agricultural region. It was endowed with the holdings in the manor of Cleeve, which lay between Exmoor and the Quantock Hills, and was a suitably isolated and rural location in general terms. However, the manor contained several scattered hamlets and farmsteads, one of which, Washford, was located immediately adjacent to the abbey precinct. The settlement was recorded in the tenth century and was clearly in existence when the abbey was established (Dunning 1985: 39). It appears that the close proximity of the settlement to the site, however small, was not problematic, and there are no recorded attempts at depopulation, as for some of the Yorkshire houses like Meaux or Rievaulx. By the time Cleeve was founded in the late twelfth century, the Cistercian order was already experiencing problems with their use of laybrothers (Burton 1998: 29), so the existence of the settlement may have been welcomed as a source of labour.

The extreme eremiticism and desire for seclusion espoused by the Carthusians at their inception was not always evident by the time the order reached Britain over eighty years later. Whereas the charterhouse at Mount Grace was established in the uplands of the North York Moors, and is still impressive today for the severity of its surroundings, the foundations at London and Coventry were on busy suburban sites. However, Witham Priory, as the first house of the order in England, was founded with strict adherence to the ideal of isolation. The community was endowed with the liberty of Witham, a substantial plot of land created within the royal forest of Selwood (Figure 4.3), within which their rights to privacy and exemption from manorial and ecclesiastical dues were firmly enforced. There is evidence that other landowners were compensated in return for their claims, to ensure sole ownership for the order (McGarvie 1981), but there is no direct evidence for depopulation. The site of the priory itself was at the northern edge of the liberty, screened from settlements to the north by the contour of the land. The lower house for the laybrothers was established over 1 km to the south west, again screened from the priory by the natural topography.

The Carthusian community founded at Hatherop (Gloucestershire) was moved shortly afterwards to Hinton, and unlike Witham, the monks were established within a populated manor. They were, however, extended the same rights of privacy and independence as Witham (Scott Holmes 1911: 119), and the house itself was

established one km away from the settlement and parish church. The foundation charter of the new house placed the community within a hunting park (Scott Holmes 1896: 486), which presumably afforded a degree of extra seclusion and separation from surrounding settlements. Both Beauvale and Sheen Charterhouses were also located within emparked land (Aston 1990: 14).

In conclusion, the new order houses in the region can be considered successful in achieving the seclusion and isolation embodied in their earliest principles. Only at Cleeve Abbey was there a settlement in immediate proximity to the monastery. In the other cases, careful selection of a site screened from surrounding settlement by natural topography kept the monastic house removed from secular life. The two charterhouses used secular 'political' boundaries- the liberty at Witham, and the existing hunting park at Hinton- to reinforce their seclusion. Hinton was located in a fairly well populated area, so this must have been a valuable addition to their privacy. Indeed the association of the houses with land that enjoyed special status and a tendency to more sparse population- royal forests at Witham and Stanley, and emparked land at Hinton- is noticeable.

4.2.4 Rural houses

Many of the monastic houses in the region were founded in what may be considered 'classic' rural locations that provided seclusion and space to lay out a precinct and claustral buildings, with a suitable water supply, but often access to the secular world as well. That these considerations were not the universal expression of monastic siting choices is clearly demonstrated by section 4.2.1, but the location of many of the houses do appear to have been guided by them. Early monastic research often concentrated on wealthy, male communities in rural locations, and the two have very much been viewed as synonymous and 'normal' in terms of monastic siting until recent years[15].

However, in Somerset and Wiltshire, the post-Conquest houses that were established in rural locations were not generally these foundations. Only two of the middle-sized houses of the black monks and canons were located in rural rather than

suburban situations. Bradenstoke was established on a flat and spacious site several kilometres away from the settlement of Lyneham, and Monkton Farleigh adjacent to the village of the same name. The Augustinian priory at Buckland was similarly established on a sloping site within the manor Durston, as was the small house at Barlinch.

The three Benedictine female foundations, were each set within their own precincts adjacent to the villages that bore the same name. Barrow Gurney and Kington St Michael were both located at some distance to the adjacent settlement from which they took their name, whereas Cannington was founded in close proximity to the village. Its foundation may have been guided by the location of a pre-Conquest minster within the settlement. Lacock Abbey, like Barrow Gurney and Kington St Michael, was founded on an open sloping site above a river, and was adjacent to the village. The exact location was said to have been revealed to the founder in a dream (Rogers 1979), and typifies the classic monastic site, despite being next to the settlement.

4.2.5 Translations

Many monastic communities moved from their original site at some point in their history. Some of the best-known cases of translation are those undertaken by Cistercian communities, but a substantial proportion of other houses, particularly Augustinian, moved from their original location as well[16]. The majority of these moves happened within several years of the original foundation, but a few communities suffered far more complex translation histories. Similarly, the distance moved by the communities varied from a local shift within a manor or parish to a considerable number of kilometres.

The Cistercian community founded by Queen Matilda at Loxwell in northern Wiltshire moved to a new site at Stanley, 2.5 kilometres away (Figure 4.4), within three years of its inception, and a full claustral complex was laid out on the south bank of the

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[15] See Gilchrist & Mytum 1989 and 1993 for changing approaches in monastic studies.
[16] See Burton (1994: 132) and Robinson (1980) for examples of some of the many site moves made by monastic foundations nationally.

River Marden. Similarly, the Carthusian monks of Hatherop in Gloucestershire had been in existence just five years when their patron, the Countess of Salisbury, re-established them at Hinton in Somerset, nearly 60 km away. At Woodspring, the early history of the priory is poorly documented, but it appears that an initial community centred on a chapel at *Dodlinch* before 1217, may have moved to the final priory site within ten years.

The reason for the movement of a monastic community is sometimes mentioned in their documentary records, and is usually attributed to the unsuitability of the original site, primarily the lack of the basic pre-requisites of space, water supply and drainage and agricultural potential. However, in many cases, only the topography of the sites provide information. At Stanley, the move was probably prompted by lack of space at the original site. Loxwell Farm, which is thought to mark the initial location, is on much higher, more steeply contoured ground than the final site, and it would not have been suitable for laying out a claustral complex the size of the final establishment at Stanley. Donkin (1978) suggests lack of water supply as the reason for the move. It is true that the higher altitude may have made water management a problem, and the complex arrangement of channels and leats within the precinct at Stanley would not have been possible at Loxwell. However, the foundation grant explicitly mentioned the water supply at Loxwell, and there are many springs on the site (Brown 1996), which were in fact used to supply the later abbey, so shortage cannot have been a problem.

In situations where the removal occurred within a short time and to a site within a short distance of the original foundation, it is possible that the first was always intended as a temporary one. There is little documentary evidence to extend this argument in most cases, but it remains a possibility for Stanley. The foundation grant concerning Loxwell however, does suggest that the original site with the spring was a special one, and it is possible that the donation was made for this reason, and its unsuitability only became apparent when building was contemplated.

The translation from Hatherop to Hinton was of a different scale. The monks had petitioned for aid to the widow of their founder because of their insufficient endowments (Scott Holmes 1911: 119), and the move was presumably made to place them at the heart of their new property. As discussed above, it also located the

community within emparked land, similarly to the charterhouses of Beauvale and Sheen. The desire for a more secluded site may thus have been a factor in the translation.

Because the translation at Woodspring is obscure, and the initial site of Dodlinch unlocated, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the move. However, it seems possible to interpret the evidence to suggest that Dodlinch may have been little more than a chapel and small community, whilst the foundation of a full priory at Woodspring, near to the chapel site, was always the final intention of the patron[17].

Finally, Taunton Priory was moved across a very short distance during the twelfth century. It was initially located within the Saxon town, as its minster predecessor had been (Figure 4.1). A grant of more land to the east of the settlement is recorded in 1138 (Bush 1984: 104), and the priory moved to a new site there, presumably to allow a more spacious precinct and room for claustral buildings unconstrained by the growing town and re-development of the castle (ibid.).

4.3 The cloister

The claustral complex was the heart of every medieval monastery. It represented the focus of spiritual, financial and architectural achievement for the religious community, as well as being the home environment for the majority of religious in the Middle Ages. Thus, the cloister had to fulfil several functions. The liturgical and domestic requirements of the monastic day were met by the design of the church and the arrangement of the buildings around it. This was achieved using a sophisticated and highly formalized plan in later times, but even at early monastic sites, some patterns in layout and functional distribution can be identified[18].

As the hub of the monastic economy, the claustral complex and its associated buildings acted as a central point for the consumption of goods and resources and

[17] See Appendix 2 for full discussion.
[18] This section addresses post-Conquest cloisters only- see Chapter 2 for discussion of the evidence for pre-Conquest monastic buildings and structures.

the co-ordination of financial activity, and often contained elements of the home farm itself. It was the focus of a constant flow of goods, people, money and ideas. Thus the mechanisms and structures necessary for administration, communication, processing, storage, hospitality and consumption could all be found within the claustral complex.

The continuing development of the cloister can be seen as reflection of the economic success of the monastery, moulded by the values of the religious community, and transformed into the physical demonstration of spiritual belief and temporal power. The cloister provided the most tangible opportunity for architectural expression and the beauty and scale of surviving examples, such as Lacock or Cleeve Abbeys in the West Country, indicate the importance of this to the monastic community. It represented conspicuous consumption in labour and materials, as well as craftsmanship and architectural excellence. It was also a powerful statement of control and permanence within the landscape, providing a concrete symbol of religious life.

A conventional claustral layout, of twelfth-century date or later, can be identified at eighteen monastic houses in the region (Figure 4.5) from standing remains and archaeological evidence, consisting of an open garth attached to the north or south of the church, enclosed with three further ranges of buildings. A further six can be confidently suggested to have followed this plan as well, although little or no physical evidence survives. Taunton, Monkton Farleigh and Montacute Priories and Bruton and Wilton Abbeys were all substantial houses of the older orders, and it would be very unusual for them to be anything other than fully claustral. At Amesbury Priory, although the archaeological evidence is unclear, there are extensive Dissolution accounts which describe a formal claustral arrangement (Kite 1900: 291). At both Dunster and Barlinch, there is sufficient medieval fabric surviving to confirm the existence of a cloister, but no archaeological work has been carried out to determine the nature and layout of it[19].

[19] English Heritage have recently conducted a full earthwork survey and standing building analysis at Barlinch (Wilson-North 1999), but the report was not available before submission of this thesis.

For the remainder, such as Barrow Gurney or Buckland Priories, there is insufficient evidence to conclude what layout the monastic buildings took. A claustral arrangement would not be anticipated for all of these sites, particularly the military houses and alien priories. Indeed, recent research by Gilchrist and others (Gilchrist 1994, 1995, Butler 1984), has demonstrated that the emphasis on a claustral model for monastic planning and architecture has been biased by concentration on large, rural male houses. The picture now emerging is one of far more diversity and complexity than previously considered, with groups traditionally considered marginal, such as female and military houses, or assumed to follow the plans of better known houses, such as alien establishments, not following the same claustral model. Unfortunately, there is little evidence in the West Country to extend this argument.

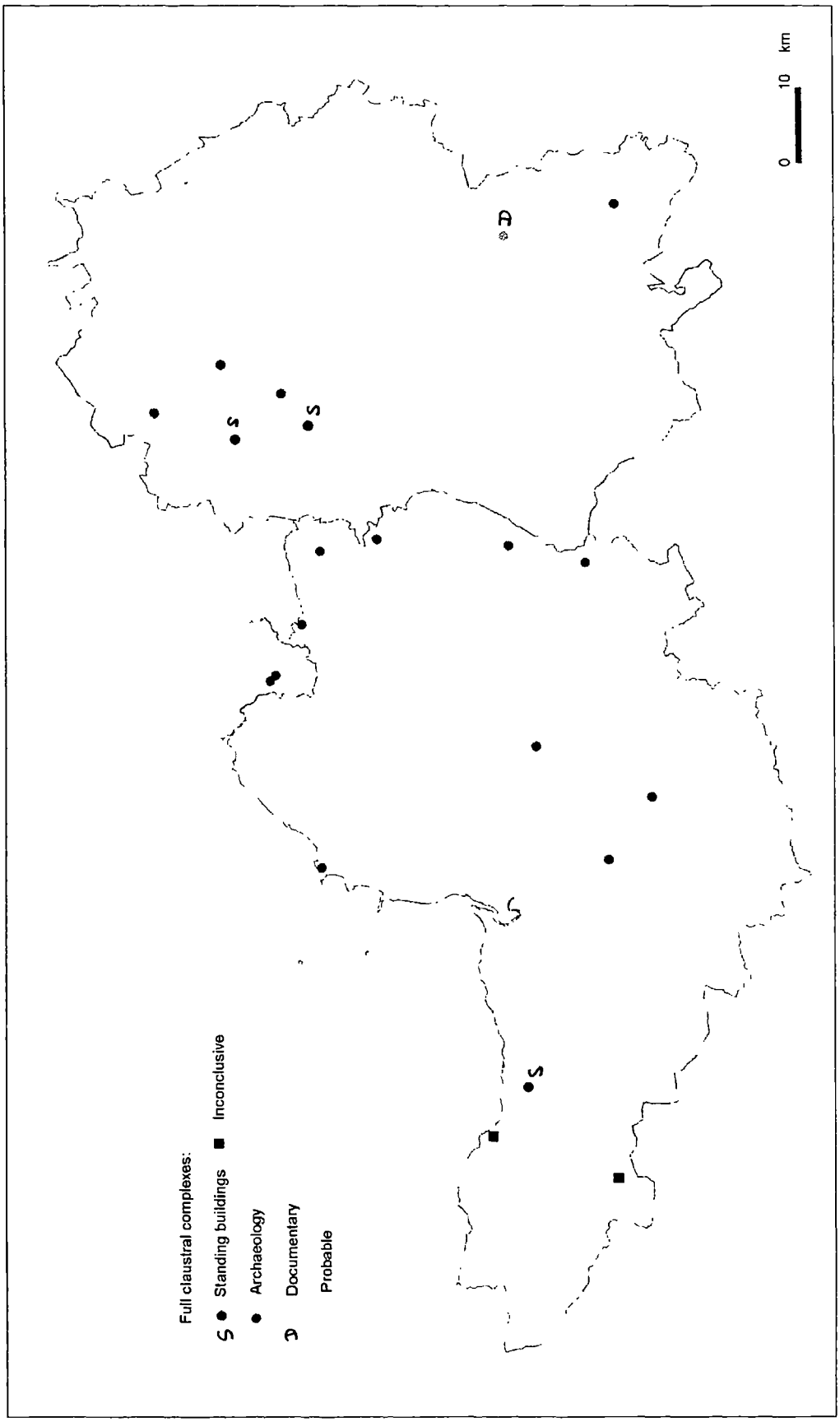

Figure 4.5 Evidence for claustral buildings in the region

4.3.1 Standing claustral remains in the region

The evidence for claustral architecture and building in the West Country consists of a large and disparate body of data, and there has been little attempt to synthesise it. It ranges from innumerable antiquarian and early twentieth-century descriptions of surviving fragments and early excavation work, to modern archaeological archives, historical sources and, in far fewer cases than one would imagine, modern research on specific monastic houses. Certainly, little modern detailed work to reconstruct the architectural histories of individual houses has been attempted in the region[20], and there are no general surveys of monastic cloisters in the region.

The paucity of standing claustral or non-claustral complexes in the region probably explains this lack of attention. There are few monasteries in the West Country that have survived as ruined monuments now in state care, such as those in Wales and northern England, because none were really situated in remote enough a location to ensure protection from stone quarrying or conversion into new buildings. The survival of monastic buildings in the region is bound up with the history of the local families, prominent or otherwise, who purchased and used the sites, and those that do exist have generally survived because of their inclusion and adaptation into post-Suppression buildings.

The best-preserved monasteries are St Augustine's, Bristol, the Cistercian abbey at Cleeve, and the nunnery at Lacock. At the latter two, the majority of the fabric of the monastic church has been lost, but a substantial portion of the claustral ranges were converted into domestic use at the Dissolution. At Lacock, the fifteenth-century cloister arcading survives complete and the overall plan of the ranges is preserved in the later mansion. The house created at Cleeve was of considerably less extravagant proportions, but the character of many of the key monastic rooms, particularly the refectory, is retained. Similarly, the layout of the small nunnery at

[20] There are some architectural histories, such as Cleeve (Gilyard-Beer 1990) or Brakspear's descriptions (e.g. 1901; 1913). However, the region lacks detailed modern study of monastic architecture, and does not feature often in such works (e.g. Coppack 1990: 61-80), the majority of which largely features the north and the Cistercians (e.g. Fergusson 1984; Hoey 1995).

Kington St Michael is substantially preserved within the later house, although heavily altered.

In many more cases, fragments of the claustral ranges survive in later buildings, although often much adapted and altered. Examples include the east range of Dunster Priory, the alien priory at Avebury, the chapterhouse and probable refectory of Hinton Charterhouse and the abbey gatehouse at Montacute. More unusually, the monastic churches at Woodspring and Stavordale Priories survive, as well as the possible almonry at the former and reredorter at the latter, utilised as farmhouses and outbuildings. At Muchelney Abbey, part of the cloister walk, abbot's house and reredorter, incorporated into a farmhouse and buildings are accompanied by the excavated and exposed foundations of the rest of the claustral complex. Glastonbury Abbey is similarly laid out, with parts of the church upstanding and the abbot's kitchen complete. The sites of some of the monasteries are occupied by buildings that probably incorporate fragments of medieval fabric, but require analysis to elucidate their structure, such as Barlinch Farm[21] or Monkton Farleigh House. Edington Priory House is partially medieval in structure, but the lack of information about the layout of the monastery makes it difficult to establish which part of the complex it represents.

Apart from Lacock, which formed the basis of a substantial mansion, the monastic buildings discussed above were converted into fairly modest domestic and farm buildings. Those which became the site of more prominent houses have often survived less well. Most commonly, the monastic buildings formed the core of a post-Suppression house that was superseded by an entirely new structure as architectural styles altered and a house of great scale was laid out. This happened at the two largest nunneries in the region, Wilton and Amesbury. At Wilton, some traces of the medieval cloister may be preserved within the standing house, but it has been entirely remodelled several times (Bold 1988), whilst nothing survives at the latter. Similarly, the history of the small and financially troubled Augustinian house at Longleat has been greatly eclipsed by the splendour of the mansion built by the Thynne family on the site after the Suppression, and virtually nothing is known of its

[21]See footnote 19.

exact location or layout[22]. Similarly, the location of the Benedictine nunneries at Cannington and Barrow Gurney are thought to lie beneath two large sixteenth and seventeenth-century houses, which may incorporate their remains. [23].

At several of the monasteries in the region, nothing survives of the buildings apart from archaeological remains, or the site is unknown. Stone quarrying was undoubtedly an important factor. Both Witham Priory and the Trinitarian establishment at Easton Royal were the sites of a sequence of later houses, but nothing now remains apart from earthworks. Stanley Abbey was partially quarried immediately after its suppression, for Sir Edward Baynton's new mansion at Bromham, and little survived by the seventeenth century. Similarly, Montacute Priory provided the stone for nearby Montacute House, and the site is marked by earthworks today. The surviving remains of Bradenstoke Priory were bought by William Randolph Hearst in the early twentieth century and large parts are to be found at St Donat's Castle (Glamorgan), and the monastic barn at Hearst Castle (California), although parts of the south range do survive *in situ*[24].

The retention of monastic churches for parochial use has preserved several in the region, primarily of the urban houses, of which little else survives. St Augustine's, Bristol, was the only monastic church in the region to achieve cathedral status after the Suppression, and as a result, much of the cloister, including the fine Romanesque chapter house has also survived. The priory at Bath, whilst not enjoying episcopal status, was preserved as a city church, although the fabric at both Bath and St Augustine's have been heavily supplemented since the Dissolution. Both Edington and Dunster Priory churches survive in parochial use, as does what was probably the canons' church at Amesbury. The monastic church at Malmesbury was

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[22] Jackson (1857) and Talbot (1894) observed masonry they considered medieval at Longleat house, and discussed the possibility of retention of some priory features in the development sequence of the later buildings, similarly to Wilton. Brakspear (1934: 423) asserted that the plan of the monastery can be seen in the house although 'nothing definitely medieval can now be seen'. The existence of a claustral plan at the house cannot be assumed to reflect the monastic cloister without supporting evidence: further architectural analysis would be required.
[23] Pevsner (1958: 112) saw little in either the church or house at Cannington to suggest they represented monastic remains, although more recent authors (Dunning & Siraut 1992) have suggested that the later claustral plan preserves the monastic layout. A similar claustral plan at Barrow Gurney dates primarily to 1602, although traces of earlier post-Suppression buildings can be seen (Cooke 1957: 62). See 4.3.4 concerning cloister size.
[24] Attempts are currently being made by local residents to return the monastic barn to Bradenstoke from the United States, where they were never re-erected.

severely truncated after the Suppression and only part of the nave was retained for parochial use. The nave of St James Priory in Bristol was similarly shortened and is still in use as a church of the order of the Little Brothers of Nazareth; what remains is a fine example of Romanesque architecture. The monastic church of the alien priory at Stogursey also survives[25].

4.3.2 Archaeological investigation in the region

From the nineteenth century, researchers concentrated primarily on the development of the monastic church, the spiritual and architectural peak of claustral life. This was an extension of the great Victorian passion for church architecture and restoration, which provided the stimulus for considerable interest in architectural history, and often the opportunity through restoration, to investigate the archaeological evidence at these sites. Work at monastic sites such as Amesbury (Talbot 1901) and Edington Priory (Ponting 1888) concentrated on the architectural history of the church, and early excavations often began here as well, such as Bond's work at Glastonbury Abbey (1908).

However, interest was not confined to the church and often embraced the main claustral ranges as well. Chance finds and unsystematic digging (e.g. Muchelney Abbey, Baker 1873; Cleeve Abbey, Reynolds 1878) were replaced by excavations designed to uncover claustral plans. The increased interest in ruined sites and the need to make them accessible to the public in the early twentieth century was partially responsible for this. The start of work at Glastonbury Abbey in 1908 was one of the first large programmes in the West Country, but many other sites were also investigated throughout the first decades of the century. The excavations of these pioneering monastic archaeologists has been described as 'brutal' (Coppack 1990: 61), and in many cases amounted to little more than wall chasing. Valuable phased plans of claustral development and detailed studies of architectural styles were produced, but little other information was gathered.

[25] Several of the other churches administered by the alien priories also retain medieval fabric, such as Ogbourne St George, although they cannot be considered monastic churches.

One of the most famous early monastic archaeologists, Brakspear[26], excavated a number of monastic houses in Wiltshire and completed much accompanying architectural and historical research which lays the foundations for the archaeological study of monasteries in the county. His aim to produce individual, detailed archaeological studies of the six houses in the Avon Valley[27] was never wholly achieved (Brakspear 1922: 225), but he did leave published material and excavation records of some form for all six. He also produced studies of two other Wiltshire houses, namely Edington and Ivychurch Priories, although he did not excavate at either (Brakspear 1937; 1934). The architectural descriptions and photographs of Bradenstoke Abbey are particularly valuable, because much of it was removed shortly afterwards (see above).

Thus for Wiltshire, Brakspear was responsible for the largest excavation and study project of monastic houses in the region, producing claustral plans of six houses, partial recording of a further two and a general gazetteer of the majority of the major houses (1934), providing a sound basis for a general survey of monastic plans and buildings in the county. The notable exceptions to his detailed research are the two large nunneries in the south of the county, Amesbury Priory and Wilton Abbey, neither site being suitable for excavation or standing building analysis, and the smaller houses and minor orders, such as Marlborough, Easton Royal and Maiden Bradley. Both Amesbury and Marlborough Priories were subject to partial excavation at the turn of the nineteenth century (Kite 1899; 1900; 1901; Wordsworth 1906).

Nothing similar to the work completed by Brakspear in Wiltshire exists for Somerset, although a considerable number of houses have been the subject of archaeological excavation from the nineteenth century onwards. As discussed above, several of the larger houses were the subject of early and post-war excavation, particularly Muchelney, Glastonbury (see below) and Cleeve. Both charterhouses were the

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[26] Brakspear's work must be treated with a certain degree of caution, his plans not always emphasising the distinction between excavated and presumed features, and presenting structures in a seemingly idealised way.

[27] Lacock, Malmesbury, Stanley, Bradenstoke, Monkton Farleigh, Kington St Michael. Brakspear's studies did not include the Augustinian house at Maiden Bradley. He used the term 'Avon Valley' to refer to the wide area of low-lying land that cuts across north east Wiltshire centred on the River Avon, although it does not have the geographical coherence this phrase suggests.

subject of small-scale excavation in the post-war period as well (Fletcher[28] 1951; 1958; Burrow 1990).

In more recent years, the cities of Bath and Bristol have been the subject of archaeological programmes, and some excavated information is available for Bath Priory (Cunliffe 1986; Davenport 1991), St Augustine's Abbey (Boore 1992) and St James's Priory (Jackson 1995) in Bristol, as well as the Temple Church (Good 1992). Evaluation archaeology located part of the monastic complex at Temple Combe in 1995 (Harding forthcoming), as did a research project at Stavordale in 1981-2 (Burrow 1981; 1982). In Wiltshire, a recent evaluation at Bradenstoke Priory has located the monastic church (Horton *pers. comm*).

There are three important sites in Somerset that have been excavated in modern times and not adequately published. Valuable summaries of previous excavations carried out at Glastonbury Abbey throughout the twentieth century are available in Aston & Leech (1977: 57) and Radford (1981) and of the history and context of archaeological work at the site in Rahtz (1993). However, the absence of full publication of the excavations carried out over much of this century is a major omission in monastic archaeology for the region and indeed the country. The site of Bruton Abbey, of which nothing survives, is now occupied by a school which has carried out excavations on the site, although no publication has been forthcoming (SMR). Finally, much of the claustral complex of Keynsham Abbey was destroyed by road construction in the 1960s and although rescue work was carried out in advance and has continued intermittently in ensuing years, the interim report published (Lowe 1987) is woefully inadequate for a major site, particularly one that has produced finds of exceptional quality. Glastonbury was the largest monastic house in the country at the Suppression, and Bruton and Keynsham were two of the greatest Augustinian houses in the region, and the publication of the work on these sites must be regarded as a high priority for future research in the region.

It can be seen from the above summary, that few of the monastic houses in the region have been subject to large, or even modest, modern excavation programmes. Instead, the greatest advances in knowledge concerning claustral sites in the region

[28] A further season of work in 1960 by Fletcher remains unpublished (RCHME 1995).

have come from landscape survey and geophysics in recent years. The former RCHME surveyed several of the monasteries of north west Wiltshire. At the time of writing, surveys of Stanley and Bradenstoke Abbeys and Maiden Bradley Priory have been completed (Brown 1996, 1998: RCHME 1989). In Somerset, the former RCHME carried out similar survey projects of the two charterhouses (RCHME 1994, 1995) that substantially increase the information from earlier excavations and a survey of Barlinch Priory has recently been conducted (Wilson-North 1999). Several of the monastic houses in the region have been covered by geophysical surveys. Both charterhouses and Athelney Abbey have been surveyed by GSB Prospection with spectacular results, particularly for Athelney, about which little was previously known. Likewise, they have conducted surveys at Woodspring Priory, Lacock Abbey and Temple Combe Preceptory[29].

The poor survival of claustral information for the female houses in comparison to male houses in the region is very marked. Only the approximate location of the buildings at the small nunneries of Barrow Gurney and Cannington, and the Hospitaller house at Buckland, can be suggested and their layouts are far from unequivocally established. Similarly, little is known about either Wilton or Amesbury. St Mary Magdalen, Bristol is also unlocated, although its general site is known[30]. Of the male houses, the same can be said for Taunton Priory, Bruton Abbey (in the absence of excavation data) and Easton Royal, where only the general site of the house can be suggested from survey work. Little is known of the site of the two military houses in Wiltshire, and knowledge of the alien priories in the region is generally poor.

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[29] Full references to all RCHME, English Heritage and GSB Prospection surveys are provided in the references. A number of monastic survey projects have also taken place under the auspices of the University of Bristol, as part of post-graduate and undergraduate work, as well as by the author. Geophysical and earthwork surveys of Woodspring, Montacute, Edington and Easton Royal Priories and desktop studies of Bradenstoke and Cleeve Abbeys and Monkton Farleigh Priory have been completed.

[30] It is possible that current development work on the site will uncover evidence for the nunnery.

4.3.3 Gender, regional clustering and the north south divide

Table 1 (Appendix 1) lists the houses in the region for which it is possible to determine whether the claustral ranges fell on the north or south of the monastic church. There is sufficient information from archaeology, standing remains and survey to do this at twenty-two of the houses. At both Montacute and Edington Priories, the interpretation is made from topographic evidence alone, but the result is considered to be convincing. At Montacute Priory, the distribution of the standing buildings- the gatehouse and parish church- combined with evidence from earthwork survey and the topography of the physical landscape suggests that the cloister lay to the south of a monastic church, which was probably located by the present parish church. Edington Priory was a unique house in Britain, and the exact nature of the cloister cannot fully be established, indeed it is possible that it was detached from the church in some way, but again, topographical evidence suggests that whatever its arrangement, the cloister lay to the north of the church.

Amesbury Priory has not been included in this discussion. There are only antiquarian descriptions of the excavation of the remains of the religious house (Kite 1901: 439), and Dissolution accounts of the buildings (Kite 1900: 291), and previously these have been interpreted as a north cloister (RCHME 1987: 233). However, re-examination of the evidence suggests that this conclusion is in fact unsupported, and thus Amesbury has not been included in the analysis.

Of the twenty-two houses, thirteen have south cloisters and nine have north ones. Traditionally, the distribution of the cloister on the south side of the church has been considered as the favoured model for monastic planning (Cook 1961: 59) and north cloisters have been considered as a measure adopted only in cases of topographical constraint, due to water supply or restricted space. In more recent times, Gilchrist (1994: 128) has suggested that the gender of the monastic establishment affected the location of a north or south cloister, with a high proportion of female houses built

with north cloisters as a deliberate choice rather than a result of topography[31]. She argues that north cloisters thus represented a direct physical manifestation of the spiritual association of women with the north of the church (ibid.).

The West Country evidence contributes little to the discussion of female cloisters: the orientation of just two nunnery cloisters is known. Lacock is the only identifiable female north cloister . The nunnery was located on a wide, flat piece of meadowland drained by the River Avon and supplied with water from Bowden Hill to the south east (Rogers 1979: 25) (see Chapter 5). The site is spacious and there is no topographical necessity for the north cloister, suggesting it may have been a deliberate choice as Gilchrist suggests. On the other hand, Kington St Michael, the only other nunnery in the region for which the layout can be reconstructed, had a conventional southern claustral arrangement.

Of more note is the high incidence of north cloisters amongst the male houses - 40% of those with known plans. Some can be argued to be the result of physical topographic factors, to a greater or lesser degree. The Cistercian house at Stanley is a classic case. The community founded at Loxwell in Wiltshire moved to a new site at Stanley shortly after its inception, where a north cloister was laid out. The move was possibly an attempt to gain a more spacious site (Brown 1996), the area of Loxwell consisting of much higher, more steeply contoured ground than the final abbey location. The site at Stanley was not restricted in any way, and provided a relatively flat, spacious area of land on which to lay out the cloister. However, the position of the River Marden to the north, and rising ground to the south, combined with water sources to the south west, would clearly suggest a north cloister to take advantage of the natural topography.

Although less clearly, the two Augustinian houses at Stavordale and Ivychurch, and the Bonshommes house at Edington, can all be argued as north cloisters on topographic grounds, although none are built on particularly constricted sites. At

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[31] Wide-scale surveys of claustral plans confirm that, statistically, south cloisters were most common- only one fifth of the male Cistercian houses (with known plans) in Robinson (1998), for example, had a north cloister, and in Gilchrist's (1994) study, only one third of English nunneries did. However, Gilchrist's argument rests not on numbers, but on her survey of individual topographic conditions at each nunnery: she concluded that many nunnery north cloisters indicated a deliberate choice against a more favourable south cloister. Without comparable and wide-ranging evidence for male houses, it is hard to extend the debate.

each, the slope of the land to a water course means that a north cloister is advantageous to maintain the church as the highest point in the complex. At Bradenstoke, the north cloister does not seem essential on topographic grounds, rather mildly advantageous at best. The monastic buildings sit at the top of a steep ridge overlooking the valley, but the site itself is flat, and a south cloister would appear as likely as the north one. However, similarly to the situation at Malmesbury (below), the choice of a north cloister placed the domestic buildings rather than the church right up to where the ground falls away sharply.

Edington illustrates a second set of factors that appear to have played a role in the north cloisters of the region: the restrictions imposed by existing settlement and religious topography. Edington had an existing parish church when the monastery was established, which may have influenced the choice of the north cloister. Similarly, Dunster Priory was located in an urban setting, and was perhaps constrained by the donation of an existing church at its foundation. The existing monastic church lies immediately adjacent to the area of the town most likely to be the earliest part of the settlement (Aston & Leech 1977: 45), and assuming continuity in church site, this left no space for a south cloister.

The ancient nature of both the monastery and town at Malmesbury, combined with the unusual hill-top situation, means that the influences on the north cloister layout may stretch back into the pre-Conquest period. Despite a complex water supply issue, there is little on purely topographic grounds, to make a south cloister impossible or undesirable. It seems most likely that the position of the church may instead have been laid out with respect to the existence of earlier Saxon structures or burial areas. Many of the Norman refoundations in the area which have been investigated show continuity in church sites, such as Wells (Rodwell 1982), Cirencester (Wilkinson & McWhirr 1998) and Glastonbury (Rahtz 1993). It is also worth noting that the final north cloister layout at the small site placed the domestic ranges, rather than the church, adjacent to the steep slope above the River Avon (see Chapter 5). This did interpose the church between the cloister and the busy settlement and placed the ranges requiring the greatest drainage, such as the reredorter and kitchen, against the slope rather than the town.

Similarly, the other north cloister in the region associated with an urban settlement may be explained by the settlement, rather than physical, topography. St James Priory was located to the north of the town walls of Bristol, and laid out on raised ground north of the River Frome, at the foot of Kingsdown Hill (Jackson 1995: 3). The reconstruction of the immediate medieval landscape is complicated by modern urban development, but it is difficult to find a topographic explanation for the north cloister. However, as with Malmesbury, the monastic church was located between the cloister and the town wall, and its use for parochial worship might be suggested as a reason for placing it nearest the town to allow access without compromising the privacy of the precinct in general (see Chapter 5).

One further observation concerning the distribution of north cloisters in the region can be made. Brakspear first noted the clustering of houses with north cloisters in north Wiltshire, and he regarded it as a 'curious coincidence' (1922: 228). The four houses in the Avon Valley (Malmesbury, Stanley, Bradenstoke and Lacock) do stand out when the north cloisters are mapped (Figure 4.6). Gilchrist noted clustering in female north cloisters across the country, and attributed this to the influence of one important early foundation in each group, which then established a trend for north cloisters in an area (1994: 137). She associated early Saxon double houses, refounded for men or women, with north cloisters (ibid.), and cited Malmesbury as the key seventh-century house in the Wiltshire group. However, her assertion that 'none of [this group] were planned according to functional restrictions' (ibid.) cannot be supported entirely. At Stanley, a north cloister was the logical choice, given the orientation of the river, and at Bradenstoke, slightly advantageous over a south one. At Malmesbury, the origins of the north cloister are too early and complicated to make assumptions about, but it is a practical solution to the physical and settlement topography of the promontory. Only the female foundation at Lacock can be suggested as a deliberate north cloister choice[32].

In summary, the majority of cloisters in the region were located to the south of the monastic church, but the incidence of north cloisters is high for the male houses.

[32] And note that traditions of a double house at Malmesbury are tenuous- see chapter 2. It may also be worth noting that the motherhouses of both Stanley (Quarr Abbey) and Bradenstoke (Cirencester Abbey) had north cloisters, which has been suggested as a factor. Overall however, the impact of this is difficult to assess.

Proximity to settlement, combined with pre-existing religious institutions, can be suggested as the biggest factor in this high incidence, although physical topography also played a role. For several, the topographic factors involved in the choice of a north cloister are ambiguous. At the other end of the spectrum, Lacock provides the clearest example where there can be considered no topographic advantages to the selection of the north cloister. The distribution of the north and south cloisters in the region is striking. The north cloisters cluster strongly in north-west Wiltshire, and the common theme to the foundations is geographical rather than order, gender or age. Although topography and history appears to play a role at most of the sites, the existence of a local trend for north cloisters cannot be discounted.

The crucial information that is absent from any discussion of north cloisters concerns the choice of site initially. In the majority of cases, the construction of a north cloister appears natural or reasonable given the immediate topographic conditions; investigation of whether the selection of a specific site for which a north cloister was more suitable than a south one was deliberate or not would be an interesting follow-up.

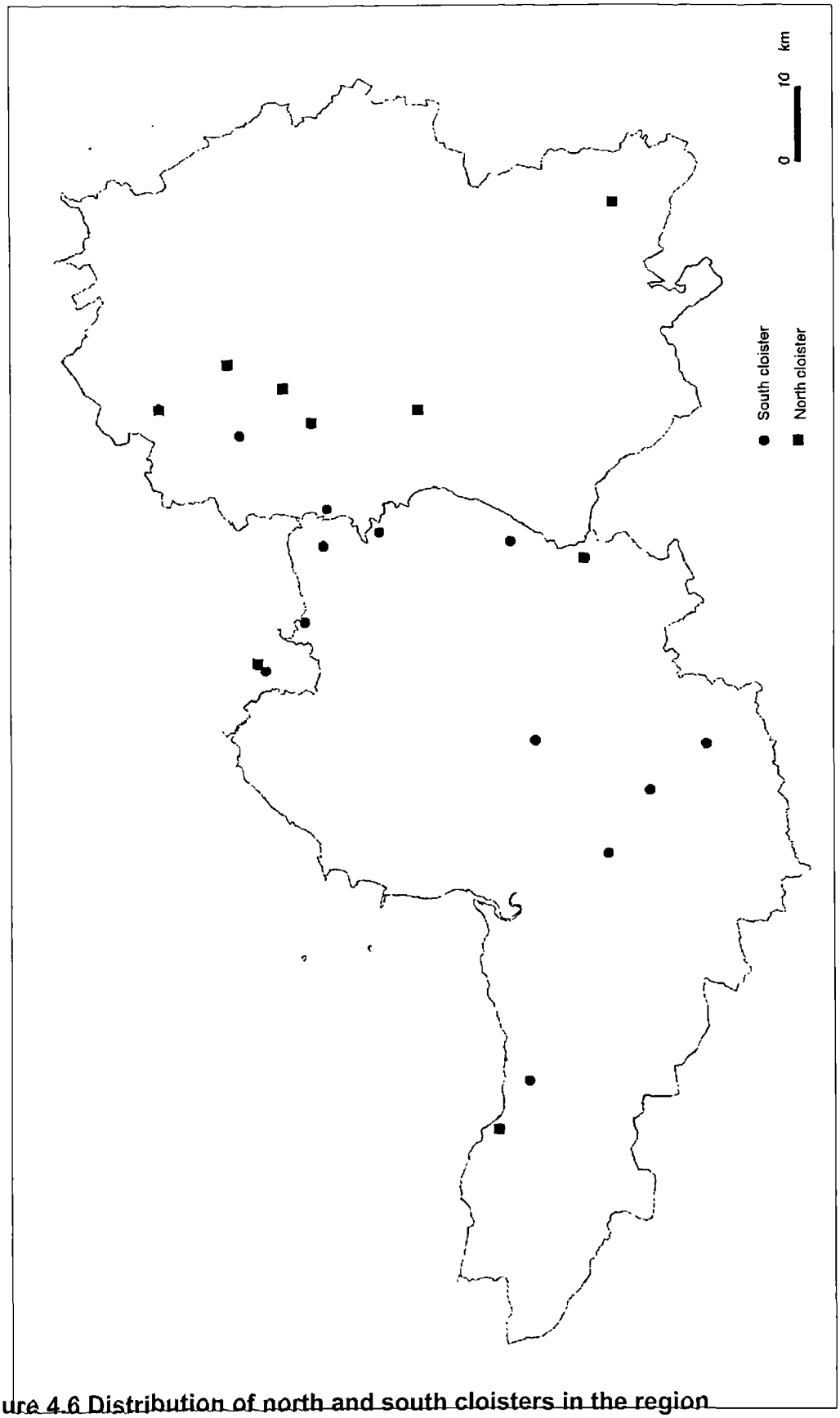

Figure 4.6 Distribution of north and south cloisters in the region

4.3.4 The size of the cloister and fiscal value

Preliminary examination of the ground plans for the monastic houses in the region suggested that the size of the claustral complex might be linked to the wealth and status of the monastery[33]. It is apparent from a cursory appraisal that, for example, the small buildings of the nunnery at Kington St Michael would have fitted comfortably several times over into the huge and sprawling complexes of the great Benedictine and Augustinian houses such as Glastonbury or St Augustine's Abbey, just as its income was a tiny proportion of the revenues of the greater houses. In order to test this apparent relationship, the size of the cloister garth has been used as an index of the physical size of the monastery, and the 1535 *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (net) assessment as a measure of wealth[34].

It is possible to measure the size of the cloister garth for eighteen of the monastic houses in the region, using standing remains, geophysical survey, excavation and documentary accounts (Table 2, Appendix 1). In each case, the measurement taken is the length of the cloister along the range wall (rather than along the arcade wall). The only cloister in the region that was markedly rectangular instead of square was at Witham Priory, for which a hypothetical 'square' value has been calculated for comparative purposes[35]. The majority of the cloisters fell within the range 16-40m, the smallest being Bristol St James, and the largest Glastonbury Abbey.

The two Carthusian houses, Hinton and Witham, were an exception to this and had far larger cloisters than the rest, at 64m and 70m respectively, and cannot be compared meaningfully to the rest. The large cloister size was determined by the existence of individual cells and gardens for the monks in the ranges, each of which required access onto the garth. In contrast, the communal ranges of the traditional plan could be distributed with far less impact on the garth size. The dormitory, for example, could house as many as fifty or one hundred monks in large communities, but because it only required one or two points of entry onto the cloister, it was not

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[33] This is an issue also explored by Robinson (1980: 155-163) for the Augustinians.
[34] Incorporating a chronological element to the study would be beneficial, but there is insufficient architectural and fiscal data of differing dates to achieve this.
[35] i.e. the value given is the square root of the area of the cloister, thus providing a length equivalent to a parallelogram that covers the same area as that of the actual cloister.

necessary for the garth to occupy the full length of the range. Indeed, analysis of the relationship between the length of the church, the length of the dorter and the garth size for the 'communal' houses suggests that the church was the most important factor in determining the size of the garth. The relationship between the size of the cloister garth and the dorter varied enormously, from Kington St Michael, where the dorter was the same length as the garth (garth: dorter = 1), to houses with a large number of inmates, such as Glastonbury and Amesbury, where the dorter was as much as twice as long as the garth (garth: dorter = 0.5). In contrast, the length of the church showed a much more stable correlation with the garth size, the garth being approximately 60-90% of the length of the church in each case. The only exceptions to this were the Carthusian houses, where the church was considerably smaller than the garth size, and the cloister laid out independently of the size of the church.

Comparison of the actual fiscal and claustral-size data for the eighteen houses did not produce a linear relationship of any significance (Figure 4.7)[36]. The data is heavily influenced by the large range of the fiscal valuations, particularly the unrivalled wealth of Glastonbury Abbey. The lack of a linear relationship confirms the (rather obvious) fact that cloister size was constrained by practical factors which ensured the monastic buildings could not expand indefinitely, even if increasing wealth was generated. Instead, there is an 'optimum range' of cloister sizes, within which the majority of houses cluster. The anomalous size of the two Carthusian cloisters is immediately apparent in the graphical presentation of the data.

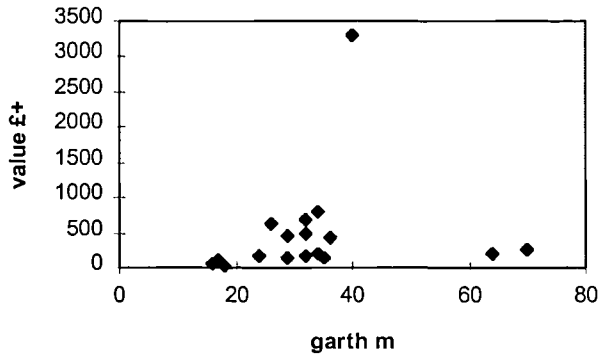

Figure 4.7 Relationship between fiscal value and cloister size (actual data)

[36] Stavordale is not included because it does not have an independent valuation in 1535.

In order to reduce the impact of the wide range in fiscal valuations, and to test the two variables for a relationship, the data sets were ranked and Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient calculated. The graphical presentation of the results shown in Figure 4.8 demonstrates that there is a positive correlation between the ranked data for value (rankv) and cloister size (rankg). The Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient of 0.503 for this data confirms that the relationship is significant at the 5% level.

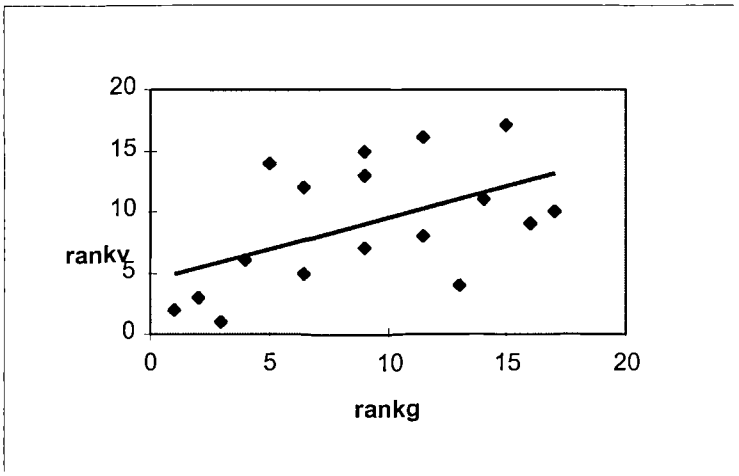

Figure 4.8 Relationship between cloister size and fiscal value (ranked data)

Robinson (1980: 158) raises some of the difficulties associated with using such a basic index for monastic wealth and physical size. Measuring the size of the cloister alone does not take into account the architectural complexity of the structure, the quality of its workmanship or 'human' factors, such as the influence of individual abbots on the final buildings. Nor can it take into account debt and the subtleties of the meaning of wealth for these institutions. However, despite all these caveats, the data does appear to suggestion a correlation at a basic level between the wealth, or perhaps status, of many monastic houses and the size of their cloisters[37]. In general, it can be considered that the greater the wealth of the house, the larger its cloister was likely to be in spatial terms. Thus the prestigious monasteries such as Malmesbury, Glastonbury and St Augustine's retained the largest cloisters, whilst lesser houses such as Kington St Michael had the smallest. The tendency for more

wealthy houses to invest in larger buildings and architectural development is reflected in claustral size.

However, as might be expected, the actual data demonstrate that this was not a linear relationship where the physical size of the monastery could potentially expand in direct correlation with its fiscal worth pound by pound. Instead, it reflected status more generally. It can be suggested that the concept of an optimum cloister dimension, or band of dimensions, underlies the data, so that the urge for wealthier houses to build larger cloisters was still constrained within a potential range of suitable sizes.

The wealthiest older order houses enjoyed some of the largest cloisters, but not to a degree that reflects their huge financial advantage over the poorer houses. Glastonbury Abbey, for example, the wealthiest house in the region, has the largest cloister, but not to a degree proportional to its fiscal value. The proposed twelfth-century cloister at Bath Priory sheds interesting light on this argument. As suggested by Manco (1993) from the evidence for the Norman church layout, it would have spanned 41m square and been the largest cloister in the region. However, evidence for an east range attached to the church in an unconventional fashion by the thirteenth century (ibid.), suggests that the size may have been reduced, the cloister perhaps exceeding the reality of the community size and its resources.

For houses which were laid out on a traditional plan with communal ranges of buildings, the dominant influence appears to have been the length of the church, upon which the size of the cloister has been shown to be partially dependent. The size of the dorter was not a factor in the same way as the church because of the layout of the communal plan, and thus claustral size was not directly dependent on the size of the community for these houses, but was tied up with the overall use of the church as the peak of architectural expression, as well as a building to accommodate the community.

In contrast, the Carthusian plan meant that the size of the community and the number of cells built for the monks was the determining influence in the size of the

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[37] As Robinson himself also concluded (1980: 163).

cloister, and the size of the church was not a factor, nor do they fit the pattern of fiscal value and cloister size as the communally-designed houses did. Thus it can be suggested that the Carthusian houses followed one relationship between cloister size, fiscal value and layout of the monastic plan, in which the design of the individual cells characteristic of the order was dominant. For other houses which followed a communal claustral plan, the wealth of the monastery, combined with the size of the monastic church were the two key factors in determining the size of the cloister. Two optimum ranges of cloister size for this group can be distinguished. The first contained the majority of moderately and greatly wealthy monasteries, and was typified by a claustral size of 25-40m is (the average cloister size for these houses is slightly less than 32m), with the wealthier houses more likely to have larger cloisters. Secondly, the three smallest monasteries (Kington St Michael, Bristol St James, Ivychurch) had cloisters less than 20m in length, presumably because their small communities and communal buildings rendered a larger space unnecessary and resources less available.

This model may perhaps be most useful for evaluating the potential of other sites which currently lack information. At several houses in the region- Longleat, Wilton, Barrow Gurney and Cannington- a house built on a claustral plan is the successor to the monastic buildings and have been claimed to represent their remains. At Wilton, the current house has a claustral length of 28 m, which, if it does reflect the monastic buildings, would place it well within the larger sized group of monasteries as one would expect, with both a cloister measurement and fiscal value similar in size to Bath Priory[38]. Stavordale also obeys this relationship and with an excavated claustral garth of 17m square, it falls into the smallest group of houses, similar in size to Ivychurch and Kington St Michael Priories. At Cannington however, the size of the cloister in the post-Suppression house is just under 30m, which suggests a rather unfeasibly large complex of a similar scale to Cleeve or Bath Abbeys, for a nunnery worth only £39 (net) at the Suppression. Similarly, the large, claustrally-planned houses at both Longleat and Barrow Gurney, compared to the very small fiscal value of the monasteries there, suggest the conversion from medieval to post-Suppression building is unlikely to have retained the claustral dimensions unaltered.

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[38] See also footnote 45 concerning the relevance of this model to the excavated evidence at St Andrew's Priory, Hamble (Hampshire)

4.3.5 The double houses and communities

Little is known structurally about two of the most unusual establishments in the region, Buckland and Amesbury Priories. Both were double houses from the twelfth century onwards, and thus accommodation for both men and women would be expected on each site. However, both were standard monasteries- Buckland a male Augustinian establishment and Amesbury a Benedictine nunnery- before becoming double houses, and thus the layout of the buildings on each site must have had complex development histories.

At Amesbury, the location and layout of the double house was the subject of intense scholarly debate in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the argument centering chiefly around the surviving medieval architecture within the parish church[39]. It does however appear that the Fontevraultine house was laid out in at least two parts. The present parish church, on the boundary of the precinct, has been convincingly argued to have been shared with the canons of the priory (RCHME 1987: 234), and the existence of a pentice on the north wall of the nave suggests that they had a covered walkway to their accommodation north of the church. The only other full Fontevraultine house in England with evidence for claustral remains is at Nuneaton (Warwickshire). Here the canons shared the nuns' church, to the south of which there was a standard cloister (Andrews et al 1981). Earthwork survey suggests the canons may have occupied a second cloister appended to this, but the evidence is inconclusive (ibid.). At Amesbury, the nunnery itself was built further into the precinct, where archaeological remains were located beneath Amesbury Priory House in the 1860s (Kite 1901: 441). Insufficient archaeological evidence was found to reconstruct the monastic buildings, but the Suppression accounts clearly indicate that this was a large complex, constructed on a traditional claustral plan, like Nuneaton (Kite 1900: 291).

There are no parallels for Henry II's foundation of a preceptory and nunnery at Buckland, and the scanty archaeological fragments that survive hardly indicate the location of the establishment, let alone its layout. It was a double establishment with accommodation for knights and sisters for the majority of its life, becoming solely a

[39] For example, Talbot 1901; Ruddle 1901; summarized in RCHME 1987

nunnery in its last few decades (Burrow 1985: 110). Documentary evidence suggests that the two communities operated separately to a large degree. They held separate endowments for their support, and there were separate churches for the nuns and brethren (Larking 1856: 17). At its peak, there appear to have been as many as fifty nuns at the house, and the preceptory was much smaller (ibid.), suggesting that the female part of the complex would have dominated it, as at Amesbury.

The evidence provides little clue to the arrangement of the buildings however. When the preceptory was created in the late twelfth century, the Augustinian community had been in existence for almost twenty years, and thus there must have been monastic buildings of some sort on the site, which may have been utilised in the new foundation. A post-Suppression survey of the preceptory exists, suggesting it resembled a secular manor house (Burrow 1985: 110), but there is no similar information for the nunnery. It may well have been a conventional claustral layout. The male accommodation is described as lying north of the nuns' church, but again, the exact relationship between the two is unknown. The site must be regarded as of high potential for geophysical survey. It occupies a flat piece of land bounded by a road to the north and falls away slightly to the south, and several architectural fragments have been located there (ibid.).

Double communities of a different kind existed at both Carthusian houses in the region. In Europe, the existence of a lower house or *correrie* for the laybrothers of the order, self-contained and separate to the main claustral complex, was a common feature of the charterhouses (Aston 1993b: 141). Witham and Hinton Priories followed this custom, although later establishments of the order in England did not, with the possible exception of Beauvale (Nottinghamshire), their laybrothers' accommodation forming a second cloister at the main site.

At Witham, the *correrie* was situated 1.5 km away from the main house at the other end of a flight of fishponds on the River Frome. It became the focus of a secular community in the later Middle Ages and the laybrothers' church survives as the parish church, retaining the austerity of the small, twelfth-century single cell Carthusian chapel[40]. The village that succeeded the *correrie* is situated between a

[40] Both lower houses have become known as 'Friary', a corruption of 'frère'.

causewayed road and the river, and its rectangular layout may reflect the Carthusian establishment. The site suggests the complex was detached from the church and organized as a regular compound rather than cloister. A substantial medieval dovecot has been discovered within one of the houses adjacent to the church (McGarvie 1981), and further investigation of the structures in the village would probably yield further medieval fabric. At Hinton, the lower house lay 1 km away from the main house on the banks of the River Frome. Several houses mark the spot and contain fragments of possible medieval walling, including a mill, and there are some surviving earthworks (Aston 1990: 17). Like Witham Friary, it must be considered an important site of high archaeological potential.

4.3.6 Non-conventual establishments

Not all monastic establishments were fully claustral in the Middle Ages. Whilst the large houses and traditional regular orders followed the conventions of a claustral layout with staggering uniformity across Europe, many of the smaller houses and orders cannot be categorised in the same way. In the past, archaeological and historical research concentrated on the wealthy, male, regular establishments which were claustral in plan, but it is now clear that these houses formed only the core elements in the repertoire of monastic architecture during the Middle Ages, around which a wide range of other types of establishment could be found.

The key problems with the recognition and study of non-conventual establishments is survival of evidence and the degree of interest previously shown in these sites. It was the smallest and poorest houses of any order that were most likely to lack a formal cloister, particularly dependent cells and alien houses, or female houses (by virtue of the fact that many were the poorest houses of any order), or minor and non-monastic orders and establishments, such as the military houses, hospitals and mendicants. Their buildings were less distinctive and durable than the stone cloisters of the wealthier houses and their survival rate is worse physically. In tandem with this, the historical survival of records and knowledge about the communities is often poor, and their political and economic impact on the landscape and local topography

was less, and thus the degree of archaeological and historical research carried out on them has been minimal until very recent times[41].

There are few houses in the West Country that have provided archaeological evidence for a non-claustral layout. Several have remains that suggest that the monastic buildings were laid out around a courtyard or cloister, but in an informal fashion. At Dunster, the monastic buildings lay to the north of the church, and some still survive as post-Suppression dwellings, but there is insufficient evidence to suggest that a fully arcaded cloister was laid out. Similarly, at Maiden Bradley, the earthworks are not conclusive, but suggest that the house may not have been fully claustral, but rather an informal compound. Evidence for one structure on Steep Holm island suggests a large hall-type building, that has been interpreted as a chapel (Rendell 1981), although the piecemeal nature of the excavations renders conclusions difficult.

The nunnery at Kington St Michael had a small cloister, some of which survives in a post-medieval house on the site. It was a cloister clearly constructed for a small community of limited means. Brakspear did not uncover any evidence of a stone cloister arcade (1922 : 246), and it may have been a timbered, lean-to walkway, as he suggested, rather than a substantial free-standing structure[42]. The south range did not occupy the full length of the cloister and the character of the whole complex is more domestic and less formulaic than the larger cloisters of the region. The potential sites of two other small nunneries, Cannington and Barrow Gurney, have fared less well in the post-Suppression period, and the process of conversion and rebuilding has left few traces of the nunnery architecture.

Evidence at Edington Priory suggests that whatever claustral buildings were at the site, they were not attached directly to the monastic church[43]. Instead it seems likely they were reached via a covered walkway, the pentice of which can seen on the north side of the monastic church. This is a direct parallel for the proposed canons' church at Amesbury. The current house on the site retains extensive medieval remains, which appear to represent a secular-style manor house. Whether this

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[41] The role of historical and modern approaches to gender in shaping the study, or lack of it, of female establishments is discussed in Gilchrist (1994: 22).
[42] Gilchrist (1994: 95) cites several other nunneries with partially-timbered ranges.

indicates the format of the entire complex, or merely an appendage to a full cloister is unclear.

The only two sites of the military orders in the region at which archaeological investigation has been carried out are Temple Combe (Harding forthcoming) and the Bristol Temple (Good 1992). A church was located at Combe, which was not the typical circular plan favoured by the order, such as at Temple Bruer (St John Hope 1908) or the London Temple, but a small chapel. In contrast, the church at Bristol was built on this circular model (Good 1992). However, the accompanying buildings appear to have centred on a succession of large halls, rather than a claustral complex (ibid.).

The majority of the alien cells in the region were administrative centres rather than religious communities, and thus would not necessarily be expected to be claustral. There has been very little archaeological or historical research carried out on them however. Stogursey was built for a religious community of five or six and the monastic church of exceptional Romanesque architecture survives. It has been heavily altered since the Middle Ages, but one blocked Norman doorway survives in the south transept that may have connected the church to the domestic buildings (PSANHS 1941: 7), although the addition of aisles to the original structure means evidence for their attachment to the church is lost. Whether claustral or not, the buildings lay to the south of the church[44] and were substantial enough to include stone-lined and arched drains 130 cm high, excavated in 1941 (Leighton 1942). Stogursey may have resembled Hamble Priory (Hampshire), an alien house of similar size at which evidence for buildings representing a 'simple but conventional claustral range' have been located (Hughes & Stamper 1981: 36)[45].

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[43] See Appendix 2 for references to the discussion.

[44] The priory buildings were pulled down and a new farm built on another site in 1810, so the present farm does not occupy the monastic site (Dunning 1992: 131)

[45] As the excavators suggest, the existence of a cloister at Hamble seems likely based on the architectural evidence of the church (Hughes & Stamper 1981). However, their interpretation that includes the full extent of the excavated buildings and produces a garth of 47m seems unlikely, placing it over 10m larger than the garth at Glastonbury for example. The evidence in section 4.3.4 suggests a small cloister would be expected, perhaps similar to Andwell (Hampshire) at 13m (ibid.).

4.4 Conclusion

The importance of urban and suburban location to the post-Conquest foundations in the region can clearly be established. Although few were truly 'urban', a considerable number of the houses of black monks and canons were deliberately established in association with developing towns and settlements, and continued the overall urban character of the monastic landscape of the pre-Conquest period in the region. The role of existing religious foci as well as secular ones can also be seen in this siting pattern, and a substantial number of Augustinian houses can be proposed as the successors to early minster churches, or the formalization of eremitic sites. Indeed, despite the high number of monasteries within towns in the region and the relatively dense settlement pattern, those houses which desired seclusion did find it. The use of proprietorial boundaries, such as royal forests and emparked land, to provide an increased degree of seclusion where necessary can be suggested, and a substantial number of post-Conquest establishments occupied 'classic' rural locations.

The evidence for the buildings of the monasteries themselves in the region is variable in quality and extent, and the most fruitful avenue for future research would undoubtedly be standing building analysis of the many houses and farms that occupy the sites of the smaller and probably non-conventual establishments of the region. The existence of a strong group of houses with north cloisters in the region suggests that where a north cloister represented the optimum use of topographic conditions, it was used, rather than solely being adopted in restricted situations. Few can be demonstrated to be deliberately chosen without reference to some landscape considerations, although interestingly, the primary example, Lacock, was a female house, as Gilchrist has suggested (1994). Finally, it is proposed that the size of monastic cloisters can be linked to the wealth of houses in the region, the final dimensions being a delicate balance of final investment and resources with the need of the individual community and its buildings.

5. THE MONASTIC PRECINCT

5.1 Introduction[1]

The precinct was the area of land immediately surrounding the monastic complex itself, and it fulfilled a variety of economic and social functions. It contained both the claustral complex of the monastery and its service buildings, as well as a quantity of land and sometimes the home farm. The exact dimensions and layout of the precinct varied enormously for each house, depending on the circumstances of the foundation, its location, wealth and development. However, the need for a space of some sort, to act as a co-ordinating point and interface between the secular and monastic world, and as an area set aside for ecclesiastical and economic considerations, was clearly felt by all establishments.

The existence of the precinct, and the possibility of mapping its boundaries and recording its constituent elements was recognized in the early twentieth century, particularly by Brakspear. He was one of the first archaeologists to produce precinct plans, which he did with unfailing regularity in all his articles. His plans for houses such as Malmesbury (1913), Stanley (1907) and Monkton Farleigh (1922) are a combination of topographical and historical analysis which provide a valuable starting point for study.

However, it was with the shift in emphasis in medieval archaeology to studying monasteries as economic institutions that the modern analysis of the precinct began. The precinct was a discrete physical unit that occupied a fundamental role in the overall economy and daily life of the monastery and could be studied within a firm landscape context. The detailed study of Bordesley Abbey precinct revealed the potential of the monastic precinct for archaeological and historical research and demonstrated what earthwork survey supplemented by excavation could achieve in

[1] Because many of the illustrations in this chapter are referred to several times in the discussion, they have been placed together at page 172 for ease of reference.

terms of understanding monastic management and investment through a defined landscape (Aston 1972).

The greatest successes of this recent work on the precinct have stemmed from its multi-disciplinary nature. The emphasis on earthwork and geophysical survey, as well as air photography, has produced an increasing number of studies of individual precincts. Likewise, the combination of historical descriptions with surviving topography can produce a detailed plan of the working precinct, such as at Rievaulx (Coppack 1994), and historical accounts and maps can be used to reconstruct monastic precincts on paper, such as at Abingdon (Lambrick 1968) or Sheen (Cloake 1977).

Not all precincts were open rural spaces, and the development of urban archaeology has contributed a growing emphasis on the role of the monastic precinct in shaping urban topography and development (Butler 1993). The precincts of the friaries and hospitals, as well as urban houses of the major orders, have demonstrated that the term 'precinct' can embrace many different experiences of monastic space and economic requirements (Gilchrist 1995), from the many hectares of open land available to the wealthy rural houses to the small gardens and building plots used by many of the urban friars. The role of urbanism in shaping monastic precincts is particularly important in the West Country, where many houses were located in suburban, if not urban, situations (see Chapter 4). Thus the evidence for monastic precincts can rest in modern urban topography and settlement as much as field boundaries and monuments.

These developments notwithstanding, the study of the precinct as part of monastic archaeology is still, in some ways, in its infancy. Synthetic, general works published on precincts are few, and largely descriptive in outlook (Knowles & St Joseph 1952; Aston 1993a; Coppack 1990). They aim to characterize the various elements to be found in the precinct, and consider, inexplicitly, the development of a predictive model against which to test individual examples for variance[2]. Coppack (ibid.) concentrates primarily on the excavated record for individual precinct elements and their development, whilst Aston brings the discussion into the landscape arena and

[2] Gilchrist (1994) for example, examines precincts belonging to female houses within the context of male precincts and their constituent elements.

views the precinct as a topographic whole, capable of comparison between houses and orders (ibid.).

Discussion of the monastic precinct at a wider level is proving slow to develop because the accumulation of a body of detailed topographic work has only gathered pace in very recent times. There is a lack of detailed *published* material on monastic precincts (Clark & Sly 1998: 47)[3] and thus fundamental problems remain concerning their quantification and analysis. Monastic precincts display a wide range of individually variant topographic factors, and without archaeological excavation, their date, composition and developmental sequence is often difficult to infer. Thus wider interpretative models of the role and development of this important monastic space have yet to be explored fully.

5.2 The preservation of precincts in the region

The preservation of monastic precincts in Somerset and Wiltshire is extremely variable[4]. Overall, the survival of domestic, industrial and agricultural buildings within the precinct is extremely poor, as it is nationally. There are no examples in the West Country where reconstruction of the ancillary buildings within the precinct is possible to any degree from standing structures, and there has been little archaeological investigation to supplement the picture: the Priory Barn at Taunton (Leach 1984: 111) is probably the only example of a full modern excavation on a domestic precinct building in the region.

In terms of the landscape of the precinct, the greatest developments in knowledge have been generated by recent earthwork and geophysical surveys, particularly the series carried out by the former RCHME, English Heritage and GSB Prospection, which have produced plans of some of the best preserved rural precincts, particularly the new order houses. Stanley Abbey is the most complete of these in the region,

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[3] Although many precinct plans and air photographs appear in general texts and discussions, very few studies to rival that of Norton or Thornholme Priories (Greene 1989; Coppack 1989) exist, and many valuable surveys, such as those carried out by the RCHME, remain largely unpublished in detailed form.

[4] The preservation of the claustral complex itself is discussed in Chapter 4, and is not included in the following section.

but many other sites retain earthworks, particularly Hinton and Witham Charterhouses (Figure 5.15 and Figure 5.16), Montacute Priory (Figure 5.17) and Maiden Bradley[5]. It is undoubtedly the case that it is the quantity of research and survey time expended on each example that defines the degree of knowledge about the precinct rather than its state of preservation, and there are few for which all traces can be considered to have been eradicated after some study. A recent earthwork survey at Glastonbury Abbey (Hollinrake, in Rahtz 1993) has demonstrated the potential of such work, even at a site that has already been the subject of considerable archaeological attention (Figure 5.1).

Many of the region's precincts were urban or suburban, and their preservation is often articulated through settlement topography and development. In such cases, early maps can often supply detail about the lost internal structure of the precinct, and its extent and role within the settlement can be reconstructed from modern topography. Thus, the precincts of the monastic houses of Bristol and Bath can be identified to a large extent, as can those at smaller houses now built over, such as Cannington.

5.3 The pre-Conquest houses and their precincts

The evidence for the precincts at the early monastic houses of the region[6] is unfortunately too scanty to allow detailed analysis of their development, and it is not until the twelfth century that concrete evidence emerges. At Malmesbury, major changes to the layout of the precinct can be traced to this date, which were closely associated with alterations to the neighbouring settlement. The ditch that can be interpreted as the southern boundary of the Saxon monastery was filled at this date and the market place laid out instead (Hawkes 1993). If Brakspear's premise that the oldest Saxon church lay in this south west corner of the precinct is correct (1913: 407), it may well be at this date that the parish church of St Paul replaced it at the precinct boundary.

[5] See Chapter 4 and reference section for full references.
[6] See Chapter 2 for the archaeology of pre-Conquest precincts.

Several reconstructions of the changing precinct boundary at Glastonbury have been attempted. The most recent (Leach & Ellis 1993), based on evidence from excavations on the north boundary, suggests that a new and extended banked and ditched boundary was laid out in the early Norman period, to accompany a new claustral building scheme, as at Bath Abbey. This was later formalized by the introduction of a walled boundary. The new boundary encompassed the eastern half of the Saxon enclosure (containing the claustral buildings) only, and was extended to the east instead, thus introducing radical changes to the precinct layout (ibid.) (Figure 5.1).

The topography of the two sites resulted in very different precinct plans. At Glastonbury, the level site and the primary role of the abbey in re-planning the settlement allowed a spacious and regular precinct, despite its focal position with respect to the town. In contrast, the restricted hilltop situation at Malmesbury was shared between town and abbey. The abbey did not gain control of the borough until 1215 (Freeman 1991: 141) and this may well have been an influential factor that contributed to the fact that the new market place appears to be have laid out at the expense of the constricted monastic precinct.

Similarly at Bath, the layout of the precinct must be seen within the ongoing development of the town itself. The location of the Saxon monastery and precinct is unknown, but it probably corresponded at least in part to the medieval one (Manco 1993: 77). The priory was rebuilt by John of Tours at the end of the eleventh century, and the precinct may have been replanned at this date (ibid.). It occupied the south east quadrant of the town and was essentially a built-up environment, dominated by the claustral complex, bishop's palace and parochial churches, as well as cemeteries and ancillary buildings. Manco suggests that the 'bulge' in the east wall of the town may have been created to accommodate John of Tours' project at this date (ibid.) (Figure 5.2).

The problems of identifying and dating alterations to the early precinct at Wilton and Amesbury have been discussed in Chapter 2, but both nunneries were probably moved from their original site. At Amesbury, it seems likely that when the house was converted to the Fontevraultine order in the twelfth century, the nunnery was moved away from the town that had grown up with it and a spacious precinct laid out (see

Figure 2.13). The earlier site was perhaps retained as the canons' complex at the edge of the precinct. Similarly at Wilton, the monastery appears to have been moved to a more spacious site 'behind' the town at some point. This may have been before the Conquest, although the tendency for post-Conquest nunneries to be sited in rural or suburban locations rather than within towns (Gilchrist 1994: 64) like their pre-Conquest counterparts, may suggest a later date for the final move at Wilton.

5.4 Mapping the precinct

Monastic precincts can be seen as fundamental components of medieval and later rural and urban topography. The majority preserve, even in cases of partial survival, the sense of being discrete units within the landscape, and remain as distinct enclosures. Indeed, one of the key functions of the precinct was to achieve this separateness, a degree of spatial control and the creation of an enclosure that could be clearly defined as monastic and not secular. Although in some cases, the need for a defensive boundary was very real because of local conflicts and political boundaries, such as at Calder (Cumbria) or Llanthony (Gwent), for most, the existence of a boundary was as much symbolic as for security. It was not territorial or propriatorial in the true sense- in many cases, the precinct boundary separated monastic land from monastic land, but defined the area that was the innermost enclosure under religious control. Within this enclosure, the precinct fulfilled a range of functions and different levels of access was required to areas within it. The following discussion examines these considerations in an attempt to discover how the physical layout of the precinct reflected its role for the monastic community.

5.4.1 Boundaries

The primary practical purpose of the boundary was to control access to the monastic enclosure, and co-ordinate the entry gained, via gateways and routes through the precinct, to different areas. The secular world might need access to the precinct for various reasons. The monastic church, for example, often fulfilled a parochial function, or lay burial might be provided within the precinct. Pilgrimage was central to the life of many monastic institutions, and in cases such as Glastonbury Abbey,

would have generated a considerable flow of traffic into the precinct and church. The role of hospitality within the monastery was also critical, and access to alms, guesthouses and stabling was required, by both high and low status guests and travellers. In economic terms, a great deal of business was transacted through the domestic and administrative areas of the monastic complex, and access for people and goods was necessary to this purpose.

Physically, little survives of precinct boundaries in the region, although it is often possible to reconstruct their location because of their preservation in field or street layouts. Stretches of walling do survive incorporated into later structures, but nothing to compare to the circuits still visible at Fountains (Yorkshire) or Furness (Cumbria) Abbeys. The most complete sections in the region are probably those at Glastonbury Abbey, although at their present height they are not entirely medieval (Rahtz 1993: 95). Fragments of walling survive at several houses, including Bruton, Edington (Figure 5.3), Montacute (Figure 5.4), Cleeve and Temple Combe. It is noticeable that at many of these sites, the survival of the precinct wall is confined to the area where it adjoins the neighbouring town or village, and the identification of the boundary away from the settlement is much less certain. Although this may be a quirk of preservation- the survival of the boundary dependent on its incorporation into later structures-, it may also reflect a difference in the type or substance of the boundary. Proximity to settlement may have required a more substantial perimeter than rural situations, and the other sides of the precinct may have been banked or hedged and bounded less impressively, particularly if labour or materials were at a premium. At Montacute for example, the existence of a physical boundary with the town is reinforced by the large gatehouse and a stretch of surviving walling, but the southern limit away from the settlement probably utilized the contour of St Michael's hill and a bank as the boundary between the precinct and monastic park (Figure 5.4).

Particularly at rural sites, the precinct was often defined by banking and ditching rather than walls, probably accompanied by hedges, and sections are preserved at sites such as Muchelney, Easton Royal, Kington St Michael, Hinton Charterhouse and Stanley, although at the latter, it may have been reinforced with walling (Brown 1996). At Athelney, the precinct may have been defined by the island the monastery was located on, and there are no obvious enclosure features surviving or revealed by geophysical survey (GSB 93/95). It is interesting to note that the part of the precinct

at Muchelney that is unbounded is the lowest part nearest the marshy conditions of the Somerset Levels (Figure 5.5).

Dating precinct boundaries is difficult without excavation, and the opportunity for reconstructing the chronological development of precincts within the region scanty. Earthwork survey at Stanley Abbey suggests that the eastern and western boundaries of the precinct were altered to enlarge the precinct area, possibly in the thirteenth century to accompany rebuilt claustral buildings (Brown 1996). Similar extensions occurred at both Bath and Malmesbury in the thirteenth century. The community at Malmesbury was granted the vacant castle site to the east of the monastery, thus extending the cramped precinct (Brakspear 1913: 407)[7]. The precinct within the borough at Bath was clearly also felt to be constricted and was expanded outside the city walls towards the River Avon to provide open land for the community (Manco 1993: 82).

Encroachment around the limits of the precinct by speculative development can be observed throughout the Middle Ages. The topography of the east of the town at Taunton suggests planned development on priory land, between the precinct and the borough boundary (Bush 1984: 104) (Figure 5.7). At Keynsham and Montacute, part of the precinct boundary was defined by burgage plots, which may have been laid out by the monastery as part of the development of the town around the precinct.

5.4.2 Gatehouses

The survival of monastic gatehouses in the region is generally poor. The finest example is the sixteenth-century example at Montacute (Figure 5.4) which included a range of rooms, and fronted the main entrance to the precinct from the town. It gives a strong indication of the wealth and status of the lost claustral buildings and would have formed an imposing entry to the monastic enclosure. It was heavily altered in the post-Suppression period to create a farmhouse. Similarly, the outer gatehouse at St Augustine's Bristol was heavily altered in the nineteenth century, but retains its

[7] Little is known about the castle, which was built by an abbot of Malmesbury (Rees 1947). It is traditionally located to the west of the precinct, but Brakspear's interpretation of the topography placing it to the east is plausible.

twelfth-century archway. In contrast, the two storey inner gatehouse at Cleeve (Figure 5.13) has survived largely unaltered since the Dissolution, although it was remodelled several times through its monastic life (Gilyard-Beer 1990: 9). It contained the almonry, which could be entered from outside the inner precinct if the gate was closed, as well as other rooms for administrative purposes (ibid.).

Unlike the previous examples, the archways which survive at Dunster Priory are merely stone gateways across the road[8], with no building attached, but they provide a good idea of the sense of enclosure which could be achieved by such structures. Similarly at Cleeve, remnants of the outer stone archway into the outermost courtyard of the precinct survive.

The west gatehouse at Glastonbury, which had separate pedestrian and vehicular access, is the only surviving one of several around the precinct (Figure 5.1) (Rahtz 1993: 95) and illustrations of the northern one exist (Aston & Leech 1977: 57). Indeed, each precinct was likely to have more than one entrance, and many secondary gatehouses which do not survive are mentioned in pre- and post-Suppression historical accounts. At Taunton, for example, the westgate is mentioned in 1430 (Bush 1984: 105), as is a second derelict gateway at Montacute in 1873 (SMR). Similarly, a gatehouse at Bath Priory was standing until the eighteenth century and is well-documented (Manco 1993: 93). At Malmesbury, as for several of the houses, Suppression accounts and inventories mention the existence and location of the gatehouses of the abbey. An early estate map for Lacock Abbey shows the 'Great Gate', which is located where the Great Court met the precinct boundary, and would be a plausible position for the monastic gatehouse (Figure 5.8).

Archaeological fieldwork can also confirm the existence of gate structures and topographic evidence often suggests the areas of highest potential for their location, where roads and routes appear to have been diverted around the precinct. At Easton Royal for example, a large platform at the southern limit of the precinct can be interpreted as a gatehouse on the main road from Salisbury, which was diverted around the monastic enclosure at that point (Figure 5.9). Similarly, a slight earthwork at Montacute suggests a third entrance to the precinct on its south side (Figure 5.4).

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[8] Morant (1995) recognizes the wide variety of forms the monastic gatehouse could take, and attempts a typology to classify them.

The RCHME survey at Stanley has identified probable entrance ways and routes to and through the precinct (Brown 1996). The precinct was approached via a ditched and banked causeway of considerable proportions from the south, with at least one other gatehouse structure and entrance identified to the east (Figure 5.10). At Maiden Bradley a surviving gatehouse structure survives within the modern farm that suggests, combined with earthwork survey, the precinct was approached from the south east (Figure 5.11).

5.4.3 The inner and outer courtyards

The claustral complex of the monastery was accompanied by a selection of domestic, agricultural and industrial buildings, the two key areas of which were the inner and outer (or base) courts[9]. The inner court was usually located in close proximity to the cloister itself, often to the west, and contained the buildings of most restricted access after the cloister- the domestic structures, such as bakehouse and brewhouse, sometimes the abbot or prior's lodgings, guesthouses and stabling. Beyond this, was the outer or great court, the area of more agricultural and industrial buildings, from barns, stables and workshops to administrative offices (Coppack 1990). At some monastic houses, the home farm was also located within or adjoining the precinct, and the buildings could be combined with those of the courtyards.

The survival of these ranges of buildings is poor nationally and their study is one of the more recent concerns of monastic archaeology. Excavations of elements of the inner and outer courts have taken place at some sites, but even at houses with good preservation and excavation, such as Fountains or Rievaulx Abbeys in Yorkshire (Coppack 1994: 415), much of the reconstruction process rests on the interpretation of post-Suppression historical records. Within the region, there are very few inner or outer courtyard buildings surviving or known through excavation, and very little work has been carried out on them at all, but there are several sites for which documentary evidence exists about the inner and outer courts. Manco (1993) probably represents the most detailed historical analysis of the composition and development of a monastic precinct in the region, that of Bath Priory.

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[9]The distribution of buildings and functions between the inner and outer courts varied, and no clear rules can be applied.

The courtyard buildings

There are structures at both Muchelney Abbey and Taunton Priory, known today as barns, that modern archaeological analysis has demonstrated to have a far more complex development history than their name suggests. 'Priory Barn' within the former precinct at Taunton, is the only standing monastic domestic structure to have been completely excavated in the region (Figure 5.7). Excavation and standing building analysis in 1977-8 (Leach 1984: 111) revealed two structural phases, an initial building from the late thirteenth century being replaced by a much larger one in the fifteenth/ sixteenth century (ibid.: 123). It was more likely to have been a domestic building than barn, with an open hall at first floor level, and was interpreted by the excavator as a guesthouse or similar building (ibid.). Evidence for an archway on one side suggests it may also have incorporated a gateway, possibly into the great or inner courtyard of the monastery.

At Muchelney, there is a building known as 'Abbey Barn' in the farm to the south of the claustral complex, and another called 'Almonry Barn' to the west, in what was the home farm of the abbey (Figure 5.5). Standing building survey at Abbey Barn suggests that the eighteenth-century structure was in fact built using a complex medieval building of unknown function (Bond 1992). Similarly, the Almonry Barn probably did not assume this function until the late medieval period, and was again, part of a much larger and more complex range of buildings that included the Almonry, and it may have had a more domestic function initially than its name suggests (Bond 1991). A small two storey building of medieval date survives at Maiden Bradley Priory incorporated into farm buildings, although its function is unclear.

Some monastic precinct barns do survive in the region, such as those at Dunster and Woodspring Priories. At Barrow Gurney, it is the only monastic building to remain, and its relationship to the rest of the claustral complex cannot therefore be established. The great barn at Bradenstoke Abbey was standing until the early twentieth century and there are photographs and descriptions of it (Brakspear 1924: 234), although it has now been dismantled (Figure 5.12) (see Chapter 4). It was nine bays long and located at the southern edge of the precinct, adjacent to the road. At both Glastonbury and Lacock, monastic barns survive outside the precinct, within the

neighbouring settlements. The Glastonbury barn is one of the few in the region to have been subjected to thorough standing building analysis (Bond & Weller 1991: 57). Priory Farm at Stogursey lies within the monastic precinct and contains a large structure today which may represent the remains of a monastic barn[10]. A dovecot rebuilt in the Post-medieval period accompanies this structure, as does one at Dunster[11].

There are of course documentary references to many more barns within the monastic precincts of the region than survive today. At Malmesbury, there was a barn by the western precinct (or 'spital') gate at the Dissolution (Brakspear 1913: 434), whilst at Amesbury there were two barns- the west barn and the hay barn (Kite 1900: 291). The site of the barn at Bath is now lost, but appears to have been slightly outside the precinct to the south west (Manco 1993: 93).

The precinct areas at St Augustine's and St James' in Bristol have probably been subject to more modern archaeological evaluation than any others in the region, because of the intensity of development in the city. They have produced evidence for numerous medieval features and structures, although the piecemeal nature of such investigation is not always conducive to their overall interpretation[12]. At St Augustine's, the area between the west front of the church and the surviving gatehouse was occupied by the buildings of the inner court, including a possible twelfth-century guesthouse and abbot's lodging (Boore 1992). Further south, towards the River Frome, evidence for a circular dovecot and multi-period walls and features have been located, suggesting intensive use of the area (BUAD). At St James', the inner court lay between the great gate at the west of the precinct and the west front of the church, and substantial medieval structures of several dates and alignments have been excavated there, although their function remains unclear. The White Hart

[10] No comment on this structure has been found in the SMR or other records, but cursory observation of its size and general appearance, combined with the farm name and location suggests this interpretation and that standing building analysis might produce good results.
[11] The dovecot within the precinct at Montacute is traditionally considered monastic (SMR) but there is little evidence to suggest the surviving structure is medieval and its location with respect to the probable claustral earthworks places it in an unlikely position compared to the monastic church.
[12] An important volume on the historical development of the city, which will include its monastic houses is currently in progress by the RCHME and Bristol City Council (BUAD), supported by English Heritage.

pub, which stands on the precinct boundary at this point, probably represents the remains of a guesthouse or other monastic building attached to the great gate.

Locating the courtyards

As this evidence suggests, the domestic buildings of the monastery were commonly organized into a series of enclosures and courtyards, often with their own gateways and boundaries, providing differing levels of access and a structure to the wide collection of supplementary facilities required by the community. Despite the paucity of individual buildings, it is possible to suggest the general location of these areas at a number of precincts within the region, like the two Bristol houses discussed above. They were traditionally located to the west of the claustral complex, near the monastic kitchen and cellarers' range, although the exact distribution of the enclosures varied greatly depending on the size of the monastic house and its precinct. Many of the larger houses retained an inner and outer gatehouse into the precinct, which controlled access initially into an outer courtyard or the precinct generally, and access into the inner court and cloister was through another gate, as discussed for Cleeve. Smaller houses might have just one area of domestic buildings. However, what emerges most strongly from the following examples is that whatever the complexity of the domestic buildings and topography of the precinct, a structured approach was applied to their location, using gates and enclosures to provide an ordered relationship between the precinct entrances, the domestic buildings and ultimately the cloister itself.

Cleeve Abbey presents a classic example of this structured approach, the precinct being approached through a gated courtyard that preceded the inner gatehouse (Figure 5.13). This permitted access to the inner court and the claustral complex, which was enclosed and separate from the wider precinct. The inner court lay to the west of the west range, and included a mill and pond. At Stanley, the inner courtyard appears to have lain to the south of the monastic church, rather than the west, and thus lay between the church and the main approach from the south (Figure 5.10). It is marked by irregular earthworks and stone rubble today, but it is possible to identify the site of an inner gatehouse at the south leading into what appears to be a well defined enclosure (Brown 1996).

The location of the surviving gatehouse at Montacute is at the end of a track from the main road and may in fact have been an inner gatehouse, with another structure nearer the main road (Figure 5.4). This would have created an outer courtyard in the area now occupied by houses and the extended churchyard. The location of a public house in this area may be suggestive of an earlier guesthouse or almonry, as at St James' Bristol or Malmesbury. From there, the surviving gatehouse may have controlled access to the inner courtyard and claustral buildings to the south east, the great court and home farm lying to the south west.

There are several descriptions of the precinct at Malmesbury Abbey that provide details about the courtyards surrounding the monastery. The area of the precinct within the borough contained about six acres, within which the domestic buildings of the monastery were located. Abbot William of Colerne substantially remodelled the area in the late thirteenth century, and the description of these works in the cartulary includes halls, kitchens, carpenter's shops, houses, a granary, brewhouse, forge, stables and poorhouse (Brewer & Trice Martin 1880: 365). This list is embellished by the Augmentation Office accounts of the area, which provides particulars of buildings to remain 'undefaced' and destroyed. It was the domestic buildings that were primarily to be retained, including the abbot's lodgings, kitchens, stables, woolhouse, barn and the gatehouse that enclosed it (Brakspear 1913: 434). The gatehouse to the outer court was to remain, but the stewards lodging, storehouse, guest stables, slaughterhouse and other buildings within it were to be demolished, along with much of the claustral complex (ibid.). The two areas of domestic buildings lay to the west of the cloister and within the south east corner of the precinct, and were structured with reference to two gateways, despite the restricted space (Figure 5.14). The western area was probably the inner court, and contained the kitchens and guesthouse.

Features belonging to a two-storey medieval building survive within the Old Bell Inn which may represent the remains of the guesthouse. Archaeological evaluation has revealed further buildings in this area, demolished in the mid-sixteenth century (WAM 1990: 220). There was a gatehouse to the precinct at this point, and the boundary appears to 'bulge' here to accommodate the area. The south eastern area containing the outer court and abbot's complex has been substantially built over since the Suppression, but a narrow lane exists that may preserve some of the original divisions within the precinct. Both the outer court and abbot's complex were walled

and gated, and remnants of an archway survived within the lane until the modern era (Brakspear 1913: 406). It may be that the route of this lane reflects the layout of both the outer court and abbot's complex. Standing building analysis of the infill in this area might produce traces of monastic structures within the later buildings.

The Augmentation Office account of the buildings at Amesbury Priory to be kept or disposed of after the Suppression follows a similar structure to that of Malmesbury, and details the composition of the inner and outer courts, although nothing survives of them today. The buildings of the inner court- the priory lodging, with its own courtyard, chapel, hall, buttery, pantry and kitchen- lay within a gated enclosure which was attached to the main monastic kitchen (Kite 1900: 291). The outer court was also gated and enclosed and contained the offices of the monastic officials- the steward, receiver, auditor and priest's house- as well as the stable, hay barn, west barn and bakehouse.

5.4.4 Public access: church and burial

One of the primary reasons for public access into the precinct was for religious worship, either because the monastic church was shared with the local community, or because a separate parochial church was provided by the monastery, usually at the precinct boundary. The final relationship between the monastic and parochial churches within the precinct often disguises a complex development, the origins of which are not always adequately explained by current archaeological and historical data. However, in spite of this, the final arrangement of the precinct churches at the Suppression suggests a similarly structured approach to the organization of the spiritual elements of the precinct as the domestic.

Table 5 (Appendix 1) indicates the number and status of churches within the monastic precincts in the region. Clear distinctions can be seen, based primarily on the date of the monastic foundation and its relationship to the existing religious provisions within the neighbouring settlement. At the post-Conquest new order foundations, as one would expect, there was no provision made for parochial worship within the precinct, the monastic church and entire enclosure being established away from parochial needs. At the foundation of Witham Priory,

considerable effort was made to ensure this separation. The Liberty granted to the charterhouse contained a small chapel belonging to Bruton Priory, and although the monastic church and precinct was established separately to it, the abbey's interest in the chapel was effectively bought out (McGarvie 1981). This created a second monastic church free from ecclesiastical ties that was used as the laybrother's church, and the two Liberty churches remained free from parochial ties until the later Middle Ages, when the laybrothers' church appears to have assumed some parochial functions (ibid.).

A substantial number of Augustinian houses, including those discussed in Chapter 4 as eremitical and isolated foundations, are also included in the group whose precinct churches enjoyed no parochial function. At Ivychurch and Marlborough, although canons from both served as private chaplains to royal establishments at Clarendon and Marlborough (James & Robinson 1988; Golding 1995), neither monastic church appears to have been in parochial use. The precincts of three of the small Post-Conquest nunneries, Barrow Gurney, St Mary Magdalen and Kington St Michael, were also free of parochial access. At Easton Royal, considerable confusion exists about the relationship between the Trinitarian and parish church[13], but the balance of evidence suggests that the priory church was enlarged in 1369 to become parochial as well, the parish church outside the precinct having being demolished at the request of the parish and the materials reused.

At a substantial number of sites however, the monastic house was responsible for the administration of parochial duties within the precinct or monastic church itself. There were only four examples where the monastic church was also parochial from its inception and remained so until the Suppression. At Dunster and Stogursey an existing parish church was granted for the foundation of the monastery, whilst at Bristol, the establishment of St James was made partly to serve a new suburb of the town. More than 200 years later, the parish and chantry church at Edington was rebuilt to serve the monastic community as well. At each site, this chronological relationship can be demonstrated topographically, the church lying adjacent to the settlement and accessible from it; the precinct and monastery laid out 'behind' it.

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[13] See Gray (1993); Chettle (1946); Bashford (1951). This unlikely scenario is further complicated by the subsequent post-Dissolution demolition of the priory church and apparent re-erection of the parish church on its original site.

The role played by the existing parish church at Cannington in the Middle Ages is uncertain. Pevsner (1958: 112) considered that there was no architectural evidence for the church being monastic, and that it must therefore represent a separate parochial one, similarly to Muchelney. More recent studies (Dunning & Siraut 1992: 73) have assumed that it was shared between nuns and parish. In the light of the examples discussed below, the location of the church at the centre, rather than on the boundary of the precinct, may support the latter case.

The remaining group of houses is the most complex. Each precinct contained a separate parochial church by the Suppression[14] and the parochial church was located on the precinct boundary at this date. The origin of this distributional relationship in many cases stemmed back to the pre-Conquest period, and is thus difficult to generalize about, because of the lack of knowledge about the developmental history of the churches beyond what the standing architecture reveals. At Bath, the desire to place the parochial church at the precinct boundary is explicitly recorded in documentary evidence. St James' Church was initially located towards the centre of the medieval precinct, probably because of a Saxon precursor, and required a lane through the precinct for access (Manco 1993: 80). In the thirteenth century it was moved to a site at the southern monastic boundary, probably to ease congestion within the crowded precinct. At Lacock and Bruton, it can be suggested that the later precinct and parochial church articulate a much earlier topographic relationship. In each case the focal position of the parish church with respect to the settlement layout suggests that they represent the existing establishment donated to the monastery at its foundation, whose precinct was laid out behind it[15].

Concomitant with the provision of a church for parochial worship were rights of burial for the laity, which required a portion of the precinct with secular access for the purpose. Where a separate parish church was provided, a corresponding burial ground usually existed, and presumably this enabled the lay churchyard to be

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[14] See Chapter 4 concerning evidence for separate monastic and parochial churches at Bruton.

[15] In many of these cases, the inclusion or exclusion of the parochial church and burial ground within the precinct is a fine issue. Here, it is the general topographical coherence of the precinct and this element that is considered, rather than exact location of the monastic division.

physically distinct from the monastic burial area and allowed separate access from outside the precinct, such as can be suggested at Montacute and Keynsham. However, nationally, the archaeological evidence for divisions within monastic burial grounds is scanty (Sloane, B *pers.comm.)* At some sites, physical boundaries have been discovered, such as Stratford Langthorne (Essex), where ditches were used to divide the burial ground into zones (Thomas & Sloane 1998: 4), but nothing similar has been found in the West Country.

Only Taunton provides a modern excavation on any scale of lay burials within the monastic precincts of the region. A medieval cemetery of mixed age and sex has been excavated near the western gate of the precinct, and represents the lay cemetery of the priory (Figure 5.7) (Hinchliffe 1984: 109). This was a substantial element in the priory's responsibilities, its burial rights extending over the large manor of Taunton Deane in the Middle Ages (Bush 1984: 105).

At Bath Priory, the area to the north of the monastic church against the precinct boundary was used for burial. An entrance to the lay churchyard separate to the precinct gateways is recorded (Manco 1993: 80), but the exact division between lay and monastic burial is unknown. It is possible that the lay cemetery was to the north west near St Mary Stalls church and the monastic cemetery to the north east (ibid.). All of the combined monastic and parochial churches in the region remain in use, and only St James Bristol has been investigated archaeologically. Here, the monastic cemetery was established to the east of the monastic church from the twelfth century, whilst the parish burial ground lay to the south, adjacent to the road and nearest the town, where it remained in the post-Suppression period (BUAD). Similarly at Dunster, the burial area was to the south and west of the church, adjacent to the boundary with the town (DEUS).

In summary, it is the twelfth-century male Benedictine foundations that are most strongly associated with the provision of parochial access to the monastic church, they and the late house at Edington being the only communities to share their churches with the parish throughout their entire histories. The new order houses are correspondingly characterized by the disassociation of their precincts from parochial churches and functions, whilst the remaining Augustinian and older Benedictine foundations present a mixture of situations. Overall, less than half of the monastic

houses in the region permitted public access to the precinct area for parochial worship and burial. In the cases where parochial access was required, the church, whether monastic or not and no matter what the chronological development of the site, tended to be located at the boundary of the precinct by the Suppression, and formed a separate enclosure. Only Cannington Priory can be regarded as an exception to this. At Bath, the parochial church was specifically moved to achieve this aim, at the others, the pattern of development is much less clear, often due to the absence of archaeological information about the first churches on the site.

5.4.5 The wider precinct

The precinct could extend far beyond the area occupied by the cloister and inner and outer courtyards, particularly in rural houses if space was not constrained. The largest precincts are usually those of the new orders found in remote regions, such as the Welsh borders and the north of England. This area of the precinct would have provided room for the domestic and some of the agricultural needs of the monastery, as well as providing a degree of seclusion. Dissolution accounts speak frequently of orchards, gardens of several sorts, and acres of land. As well as this, part of the precinct was often occupied by watercourses, mills and fishponds, sometimes to a substantial proportion. Finally, the home farm or grange, from which the monastic demesne was farmed, could be situated within or adjacent to the precinct, considerably extending its size and functions.

Where preservation is good enough, survey and excavation have demonstrated that this wider space was not one amorphous area, but divided into zones and compounds, to fulfil these different functions, just as the inner and outer courtyards were. Waltham Abbey precinct is perhaps the most famously clear example of this (Huggins 1972). The claustral buildings were situated within a walled area which constituted the immediate precinct, but beyond this was a series of interconnected compounds, divided by banks, ditches and watercourses. A large moated enclosure occupied the area to the east of the abbey, and a series of ponds the northern area. The home farm formed the north east corner of the precinct, with its own yards and enclosures, which were probably used as a small-holding, for animals and garden agriculture.

The earthwork survey of the precinct at Stanley Abbey (Figure 5.10) (Brown 1996) shows this zonality most clearly of all the houses in the region, and is probably one of the best preserved examples in the country. A large ditch surrounded the precinct, enclosing a rectangular area of about fifteen hectares, but within this, further channels divided it into several smaller areas. In the east, two or possibly three, moated enclosures were effectively created, containing earthwork evidence for buildings. The northern enclosure contained a pond as well and could be approached independently of the rest of the precinct via a gatehouse in the north east corner.

Very few of the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* entries for the region describe the precinct at all, many simply distinguishing between demesne in hand and the manorial estate at the home manor (see Chapter 8). However, the surveys for both Malmesbury and Amesbury provide some descriptions of their precincts. As well as the six acres containing the domestic buildings, courtyards and gardens of the abbey at Malmesbury, there was a further forty acres beyond the town, presumably down the steep slope to the north of the monastery, which included an area of pasture called 'the convent garden', streams, fruit trees, a mill, fishponds and rabbit warren. The 'friary garden' at Amesbury was combined with the abbey court, two closes of pasture totalling nine acres, four dovecots and a fishpond, all characteristic of the monastic precinct. The inclusion of the term 'friary' (*friern*) might be interpreted as referring to the garden of the monastic canons rather than the nunnery itself, friary being a corruption of 'frère' (laybrother), seen also at the two Carthusian houses in the region.

5.4.6 Water systems

The existence and management of water was a vital component of the monastic precinct. It was used as a fresh supply, to create drainage, to power mills and provide fish and water meadows, as well as forming boundaries where necessary (Aston 1988)[16]. Very few, if any, were laid out without reference to a water source of

[16] Monastic water systems are discussed in three important BAR volumes: Bond (1989 and 1993) deals with water supply in rural and urban monasteries, whilst Aston (1988) contains several papers on aspects of monastic fisheries.

some kind, and in several, water played a dominant role in its organization, even being responsible for changes in site (Bond 1989: 85). At houses such as Cistercian Byland (Yorkshire) or Augustinian Kenilworth (Warwickshire) Abbeys, large pools and streams formed a substantial proportion of the overall area of the precinct. More prominently, several of the houses of the new orders can be demonstrated to have undertaken large-scale engineering projects to alter the water supply and drainage of the precinct. Detailed studies have been carried out at several key sites around the country, particularly Cistercian Bordesley (Aston & Munton 1976) and Rievaulx (Coppack 1994) Abbeys.

Water supply

The frequency with which monastic houses were situated to take advantage of natural springs, wells or aquifers can be demonstrated throughout Britain (Bond 1989: 85), and many of the West Country houses were situated in areas of abundant water supplies. Woodspring Priory took its name from a spring to the north of the priory buildings, still contained within an impressive stone revetment today. Likewise, the site of Bradenstoke Priory is characterized by extensive natural springs, one of which was considered holy in the Middle Ages (Brown 1998). At Dunster, it was a well- St Leonard's- to the north west of the priory precinct, that supplied both the monastery and two public supplies (Binding undated: 7). The distribution of tithe free land belonging to the priory suggests that the supply and its route to the abbey was a carefully managed element of the monastic demesne.

At Edington, evidence for the water supply is rather confusing. There are copious fresh water springs surrounding the precinct area itself, and the abundance of water is notable. However, an entry in the cartulary for 1367 records permission from Romsey Abbey to take water across their lands, into lead pipes and to the priory (Stevenson 1987: 20), suggesting that the supply was carried over some distance, and the reason for this remains unclear. There is a surviving conduit house over 300m from the priory, although it seems a far from ideal source- the piping would have had to cross the settlement and the topography would not provide a strong head of water.

However, documentary evidence does often suggest that the religious communities were capable of, and willing to, transport water over a considerable distance to service the monastic complex. The initial siting of Loxwell Abbey was in an area of abundant water supply, but the move to Stanley (probably to acquire more space) left the Cistercian house with an insufficient fresh water supply, and so it was brought in from the old site, some two or three km distant, via an aqueduct (Brakspear 1907: 494). Similarly at Lacock Abbey, the cartulary records the transactions involved in obtaining water from Bowden Hill, two km away in the late thirteenth century, and crossing other properties with the supply (Rogers 1979: 25).

Conversely, at Malmesbury, the layout of the water supply is one of the most enigmatic features of the monastic complex. The first recorded supply was piped to the abbey in 1284 from Newnton (Brakspear 1913: 401), more than 4 km to the north west of the abbey. Water must have been supplied via the narrow neck of land to the north west of the peninsula, thus avoiding the steep drop on all other sides. The engineering involved in negotiating such a long watercourse, part of which must have passed through the St Mary Westport area of the town, with only a relatively slight head of water, must have been considerable. There is little suggestion of how the community obtained water before this.

For urban monasteries, the issue of water supply could be a complex one, greatly dependent on the chronological relationship between settlement and monastery (Bond 1993: 43). Sharing a supply with the town at Taunton left the priory inadequately provided for and new sources had to be found in the fourteenth century (Bush 1984: 104). In contrast, Bristol was well endowed with water conduits and had an extremely well-developed supply in the Middle Ages (Lobel 1975: 9). A substantial proportion of the conduits within the city itself were instituted by religious institutions, primarily the friaries, although St James and the Templar House also had access to piped supplies (Bond 1993: 44). St Augustine's Abbey had its own supply, piped from Jacobs Well, some 600m away to the north. The well retains an arched structure today of probable medieval workmanship (ibid.: 56). Descriptions survive for the activities of one particular thirteenth-century abbot at Bath Priory, who erected a new water cistern and negotiated a piped supply to be shared between the monastery and town (Manco 1993: 94).

Archaeological evidence for the fresh water supply is often scanty, and although excavated examples of earthenware and wooden pipes are known in the archaeological record nationally (Coppack 1990), there are few known in the region. The supply at Lacock is referred to as a 'watercourse or aqueduct' and the abbess had permission to 'dig and conduct her water across or beneath' neighbouring properties (Rogers 1979: 25), suggesting it was a subterranean piped supply at some points at least. One of the water supplies at Taunton was similarly described as subterranean and leaden in the fourteenth century (Bush 1984: 104). The aqueduct bringing water from Loxwell to Stanley can still be seen as earthworks in part (Bond 1989: 86). At Hinton, earthwork survey of the ponds surrounding the cloister (RCHME 1995) combined with fragmentary excavations within it (Fletcher 1951 &1958) suggest part of the supply system into and around the cloister, complete with sluices and conduits, but the picture is incomplete.

Conduit houses, used to protect and filter the source of the supply, are the most common standing remains of the monastic fresh water system, but again examples in the West Country are few. A free-standing stone conduit house survives at Monkton Farleigh Priory, outside the precinct and 250 m away from the monastic buildings. Brakspear considered it fourteenth century in date (1922: 244), but it was heavily rebuilt in the eighteenth century, and only the lower walling is original. Similarly, a conduit house at Bowden Hill near Lacock is probably the post-Suppression successor to that owned by the nunnery (Rogers 1979: 2). At Edington, the conduit house discussed above survives as a fourteenth century square stone cell with a narrow slit for access, known as 'Monkswell', built against the contour of a small scarp within the village. Brakspear considered the surviving masonry to be the conduit house described in the documents (1933: 18). Within the precinct itself, there are a considerable number of surviving channels that could have carried fresh water across the site, and a well of fine workmanship, that indicate the potential of the immediate supply[17].

[17] Both the channels and well have been observed by the author, but not dated. The well in particular is of fine workmanship, but could be associated with the post-Suppression house rather than monastery, although in this case, they could represent a reuse or augmentation of an earlier system.

At many of the monastic sites in the region, it is possible to suggest the source of water for the claustral buildings based on topographical and cartographic evidence. At Montacute for example, an early map of the borough dating to 1782 (Donne 1782, DD/PH 159) shows a water course running north-south across the presumed area of the claustral buildings which is headed by a structure that could be interpreted as a conduit house. The contours of the precinct are sufficiently steep to carry the water across the lowest part of the precinct to the claustral complex. The exact location of the cloister at Barrow Gurney is unknown, but here too, the existence of a spring on slightly raised ground to the north east of the presumed site would have provided a suitable supply for a conventional south cloister near the parish church.

Drainage, moats and fishponds

Monastic manipulation and utilization of water to drain the monastic complex, flush sewers, create fishponds and power mills has left enduring features throughout the landscape of Britain. At many of the precincts in the region it is possible to reconstruct the water management system and at several, the activities of the community to alter the topography of the precinct to facilitate this are visible. In a significant number of cases, the picture that survives today is complicated by post-Dissolution alterations and enhancements of monastic engineering (e.g. Witham, Lacock, Bradenstoke), but for many, conclusions can still be drawn about the medieval system.

The drainage of the claustral complex was achieved using stone drains, sewers and conduits, which ultimately emptied into nearby ponds and rivers, or by diverting open water channels to drain buildings directly (Bond 1989: 91). The most unusual survival of monastic sewerage in the region is perhaps Stogursey Priory, where records exist of the 1940s excavation of substantial channels, stone lined and over 120 cm in height (Leighton 1942), although the exact location and layout of the priory buildings they served is unknown. At Hinton, a series of small ponds surround the priory, one of which was probably used to drain water away from the cloister and into the River Frome (RCHME 1995: 10), whilst fragmentary archaeological evidence suggests the existence of a conduit system around the cloister (Fletcher 1951, 1958). Geophysical survey at Lacock (GSB 95/69) has located the route of the main abbey sewer, some

of which was excavated by Brakspear (1901). Water was taken from a stream to the north of the village and brought south to flush the sewer.

On a wider level, water channels were used to drain and create boundaries around the precinct, power mills and create fishponds. This was often one complex and integrated system which could involve diverting rivers and manipulating topography on a grand scale. The most spectacular surviving water system in the region is represented by the earthworks at Stanley Abbey (Figure 5.10) (Brown 1996). The precinct was bounded to the north by the River Marden, but a substantial leat was cut alongside this to power a mill and create an area of fishponds between the two. Much of the precinct was bounded by further water channels and ponds and divided into several moated areas. Similar evidence for large-scale engineering can be proposed at the other Cistercian house in the region, Cleeve Abbey. Here, it has been suggested that the original course of the River Washford flowed around the eastern side of the precinct, but was recut so that it ran along the road to the west, leaving a moat around the other sides of the precinct (Dunning 1985: 40). A further series of ponds and a stream also ran through the centre of the precinct, supplying a mill to the south of the claustral complex (Figure 5.13). At Witham, the picture is complicated by extensive post-Dissolution landscaping, but there are two dams used to create large ponds along the river valley between the priory and its correrie that appear monastic in origin (RCHME 1994: 5) and represent major relandscaping of a wide area.

Early maps, combined with excavation and recent geophysical survey have revealed the extensive water system at Lacock Abbey (Figure 5.8). As with many monastic sites, parts of the system reconstructed were probably associated with the post-Suppression house built on the site, but its origins were undoubtedly monastic. The claustral complex and courtyards were laid out to the west of the River Avon, which performs a wide loop immediately north of the buildings. One large fishpond exists to the north east of the claustral buildings, but this was just one element in a much more complex water system. The tithe map of 1836 shows three more ponds within the precinct, and an additional water channel that cut off the loop of the river. In addition, an early estate map of 1715, published by Brakspear (Figure 5.8), records the position of the abbey mill and further water channels (1901). These are partially confirmed by geophysical survey (GSB 95/69). The fishponds shown on the 1715

and tithe maps appear to reflect the course of a second channel running from the stream to power the mill before rejoining the River Avon.

However, water engineering was not limited to the larger houses, and survey at Stavordale Priory has suggested a 'well-planned and integrated' water system there (Burrow 1982: 1). A series of dammed pools and leats controlled by sluices fed a mill within the precinct and provided fishponds for the priory. The water system at Stavordale is one of the few that has been subject to archaeological excavation, which has demonstrated that it was probably overhauled and added to in the fifteenth century (ibid.).

The majority of monastic precincts in the region contained some fishponds or water channels of some sort, even if not on the scale of some of those discussed above. Recent earthwork survey at Bradenstoke (Brown 1998) (Figure 5.12) suggests that the precinct of the priory was heavily adapted in the post-Suppression period, but that some of the ponds reused medieval features. Clack Mount, a garden feature in the north east corner of the precinct, appears to have had its origins in a moated platform of fourteenth-century date or earlier. Moated sites also survive within the precinct at both Muchelney and Easton Royal, and were probably also fishponds. At Buckland, the best-preserved monastic feature is the triangular-shaped fishpond, and there were ponds at Edington, Montacute, Glastonbury and Monkton Farleigh, to name but a few.

However, it has been argued that the Somerset Levels, which dominated the county as a water resource, may explain the small number of monastic fishponds in the area (Aston & Dennison 1988: 391). At Athelney and Muchelney Abbeys in particular, as well as Burtle Priory, the monastic precinct was partially constrained by the existence of the Levels, and would have provided valuable resources for the community. Indeed, part of Burtle's foundation grant was half a fishery (Watkin 1947, I: 118). At Domesday, Muchelney had two fisheries which rendered 6000 eels at the home manor [9, 1] and the home farm at the western edge of the precinct was immediately accessible to low-lying wetland. Similarly at Athelney, the island upon which the abbey sat would have been surrounded by wetlands. At Glastonbury, the precinct was not situated in such close proximity to the water, but the abbey made extensive

use of the water resources in the area. The surviving fish house[18] and huge lake at Meare, to the north of the town is the most famous legacy of this (Aston & Dennison 1988: 396).

5.5 Conclusion

This selective description of the monastic precincts in the region serves in many ways to demonstrate the great but largely unexplored potential of the evidence. Although few buildings and structures survive, a combination of archaeology, historical research and topographical analysis can be used to suggest the layout and arrangement of a substantial number of them. What is lacking currently from the discussion however, is a firm chronological framework, and often little can be confidently surmised about development of each precinct, particularly when so many in the region are closely associated with town development, a complex and often similarly ambiguous problem.

What does emerge from the evidence is the existence of a strong structure and order to the precinct. Although they varied greatly in size and topographical layout, all of the precincts shared the need of the community for certain functions, particularly privacy, domestic and economic support, and an interface with the local community, and thus common elements in the organization of the precinct can be identified. These elements were defined and structured into differing areas of activity to create an internal spatial order within the precinct. The concepts of access and enclosure and the relationship between the elements of the precinct were as important in its layout and development as the individual buildings and functions themselves.

[18] See Impney (1991: 160-171) for the history and buildings of Meare. There is an interesting parallel for this building at Kenilworth Abbey (Warwickshire): a building similar in form in the outer monastic courtyard sits in close proximity to the former location of the monastic lakes and fishponds (Butterworth 1994).

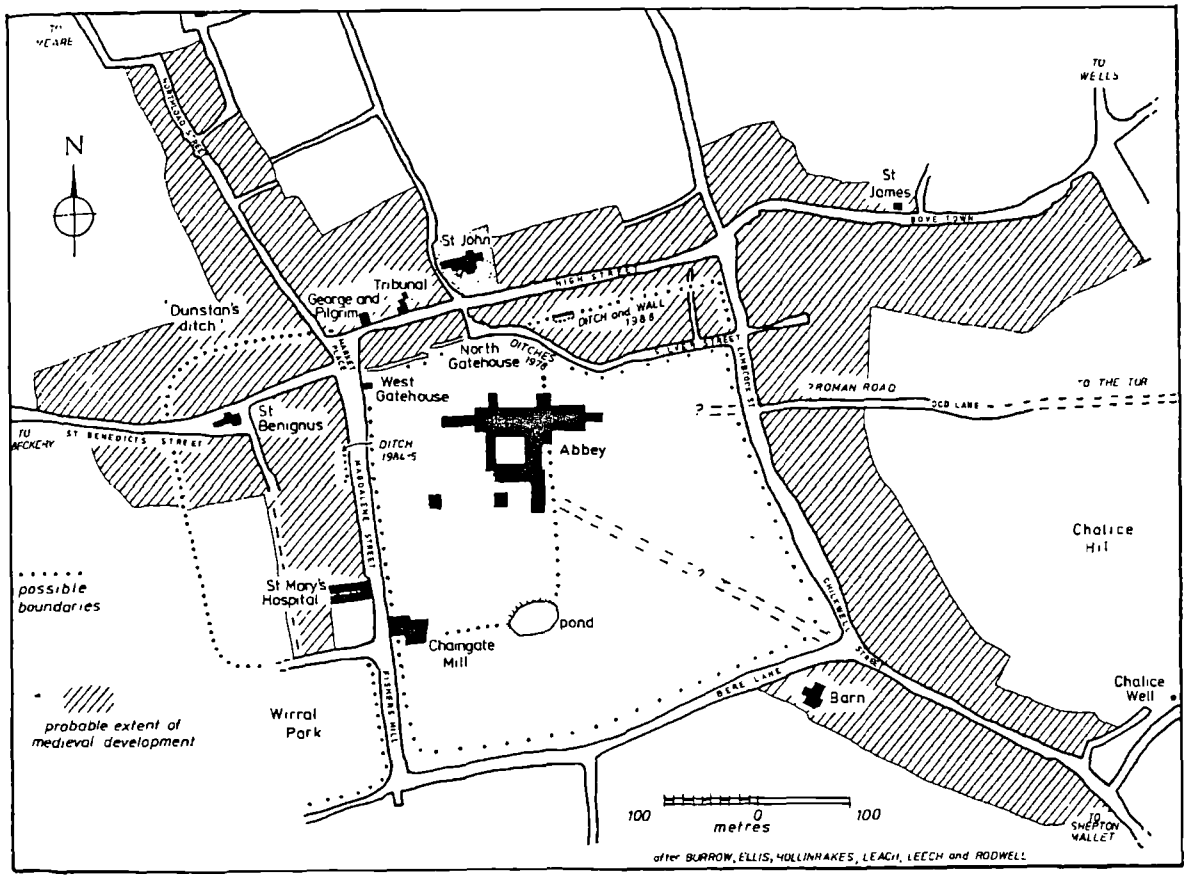


Figure 5.1 The precinct at Glastonbury Abbey

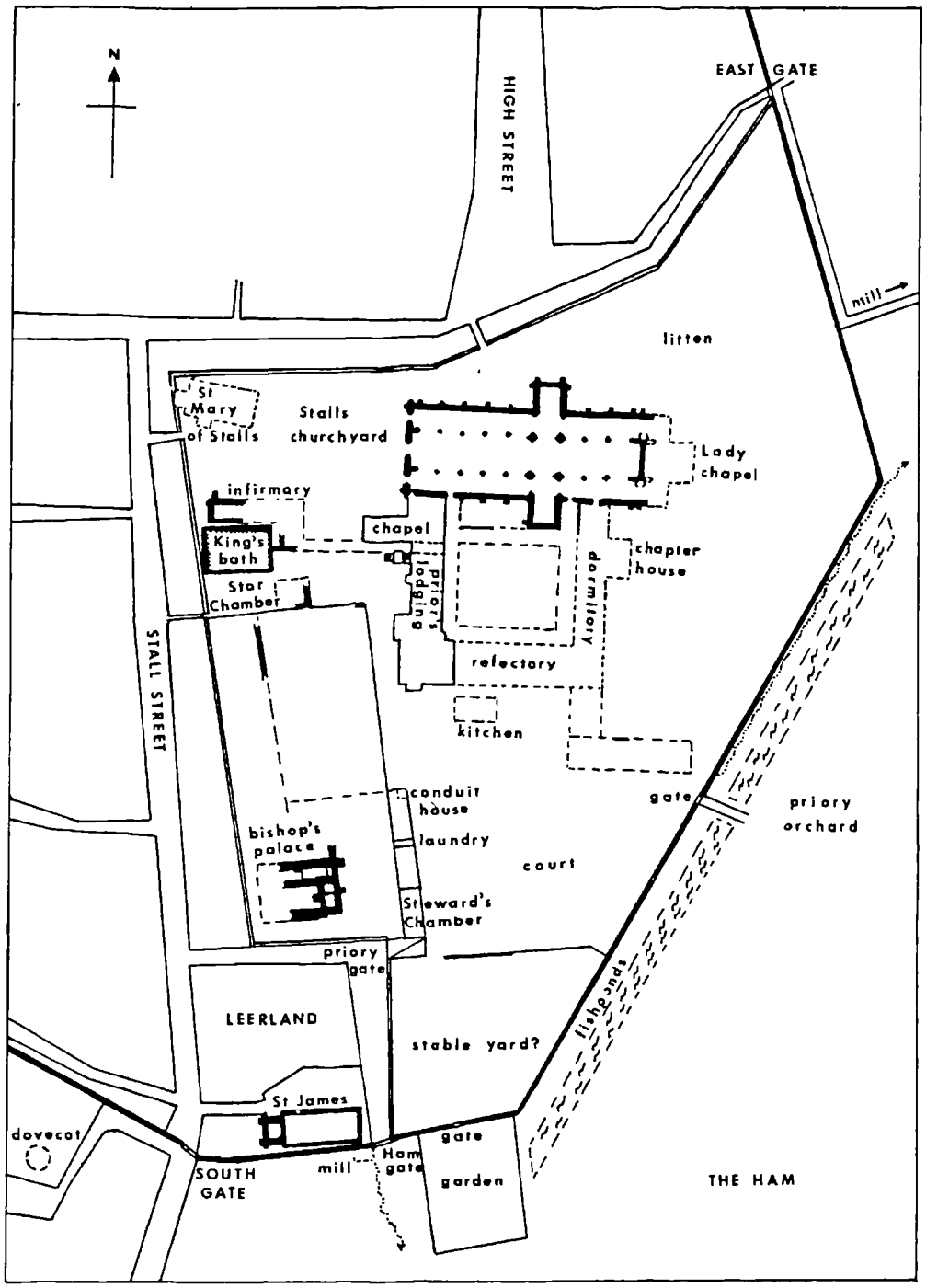


Figure 5.2 The precinct at Bath Priory at the Dissolution (from Manco 1993)

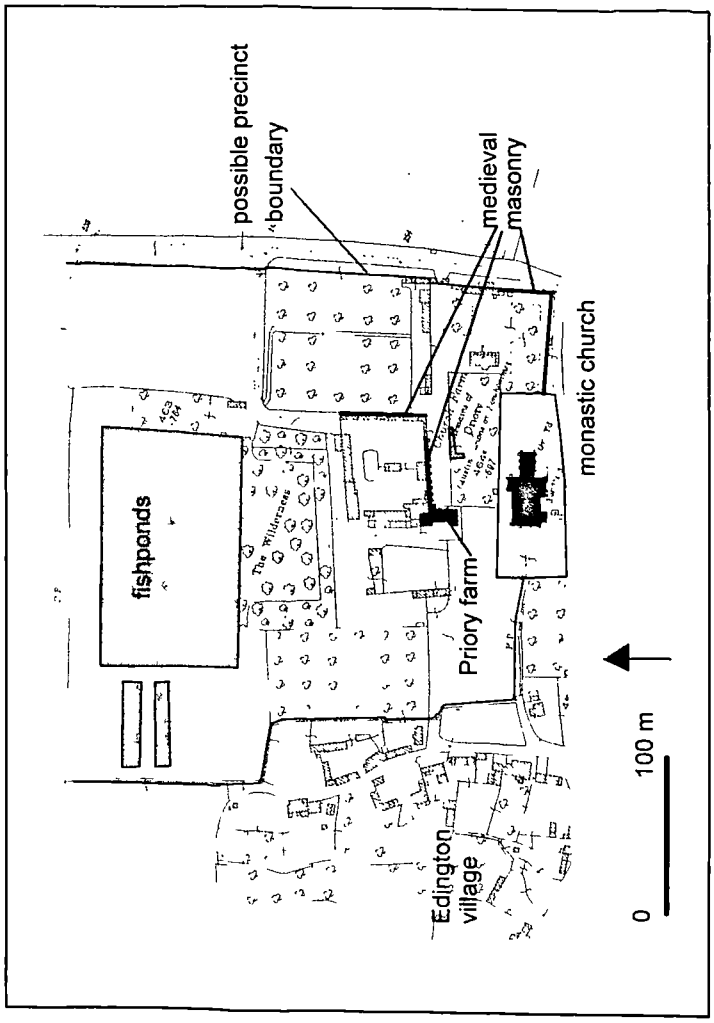


Figure 5.3 The precinct at Edington Priory

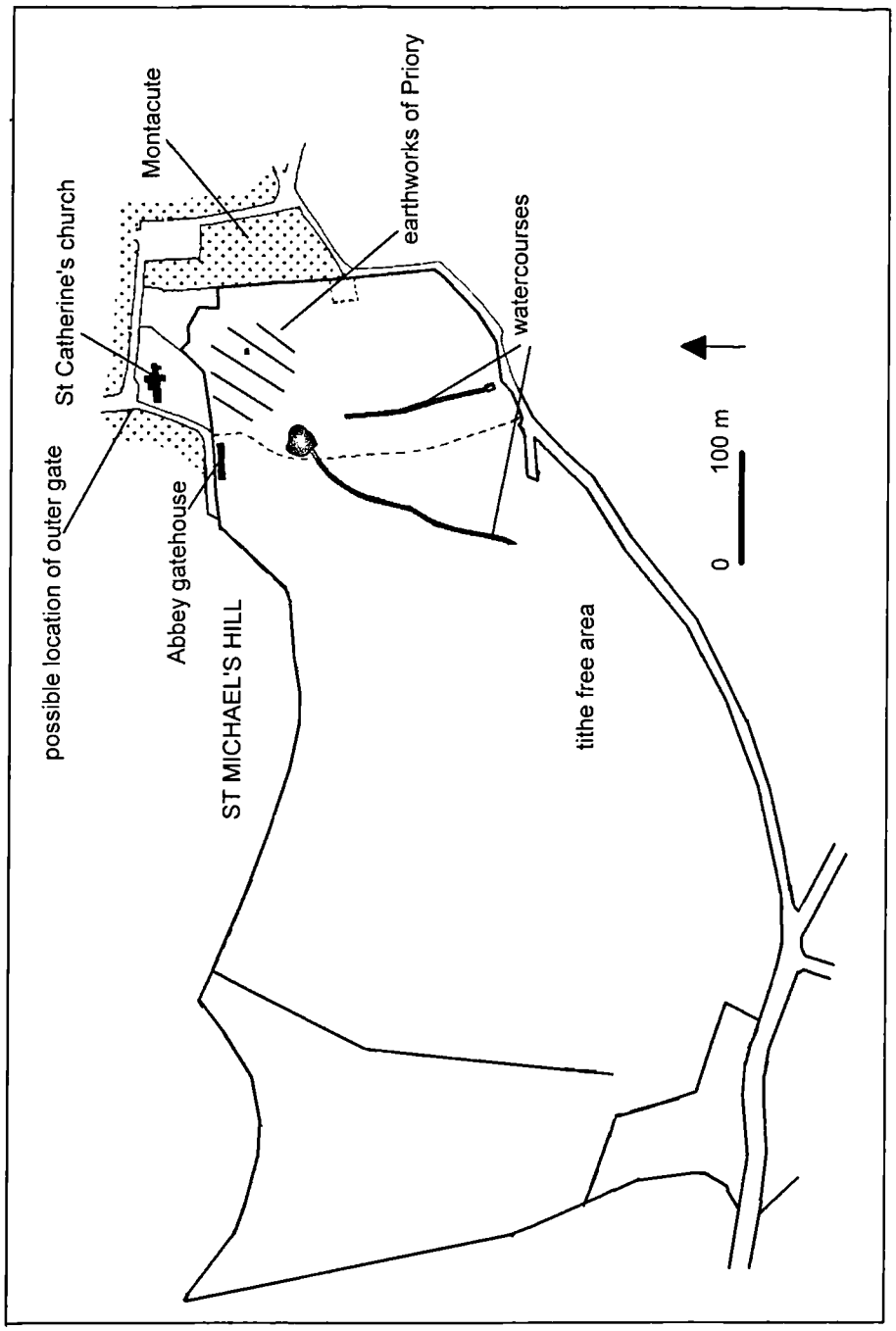


Figure 5.4 The precinct at Montacute Priory

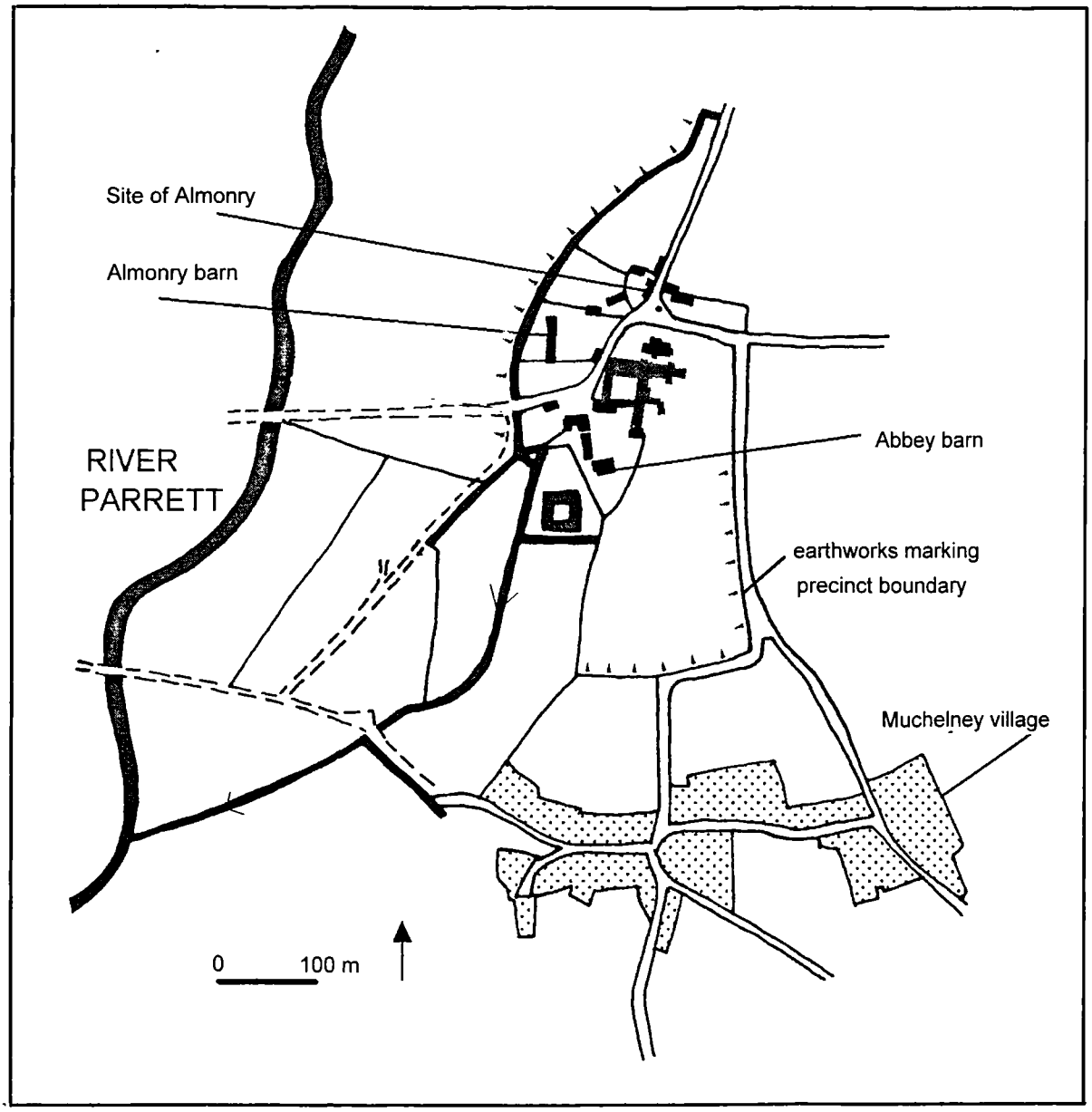
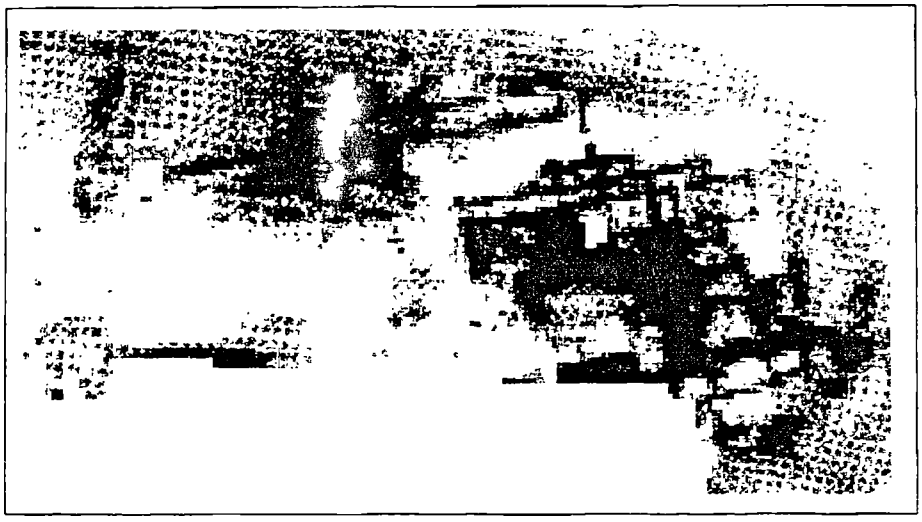
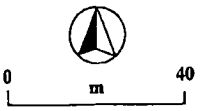
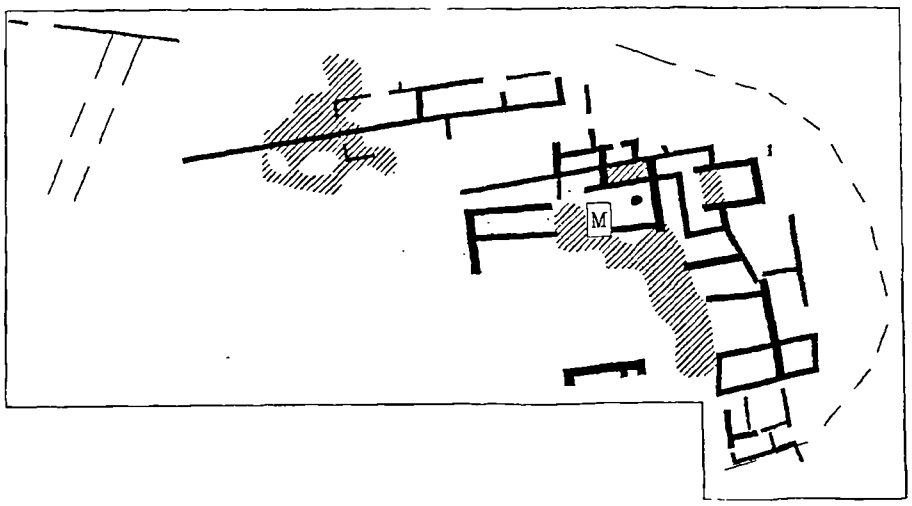


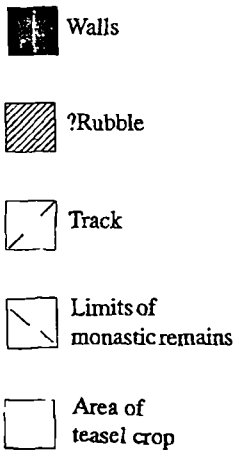
Figure 5.5 The precinct at Muchelney Abbey



Raw data







Summary interpretation

Figure 5.6 Geophysical survey of Athelney Island (from GSB 93/95)

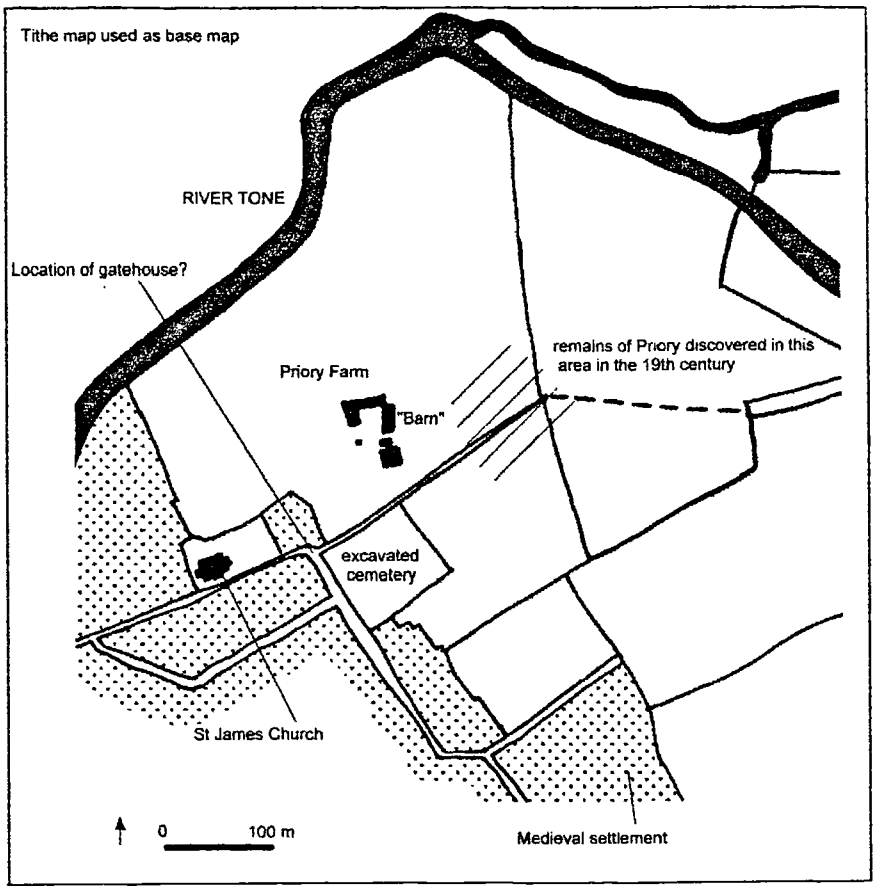


Figure 5.7 The precinct at Taunton Priory

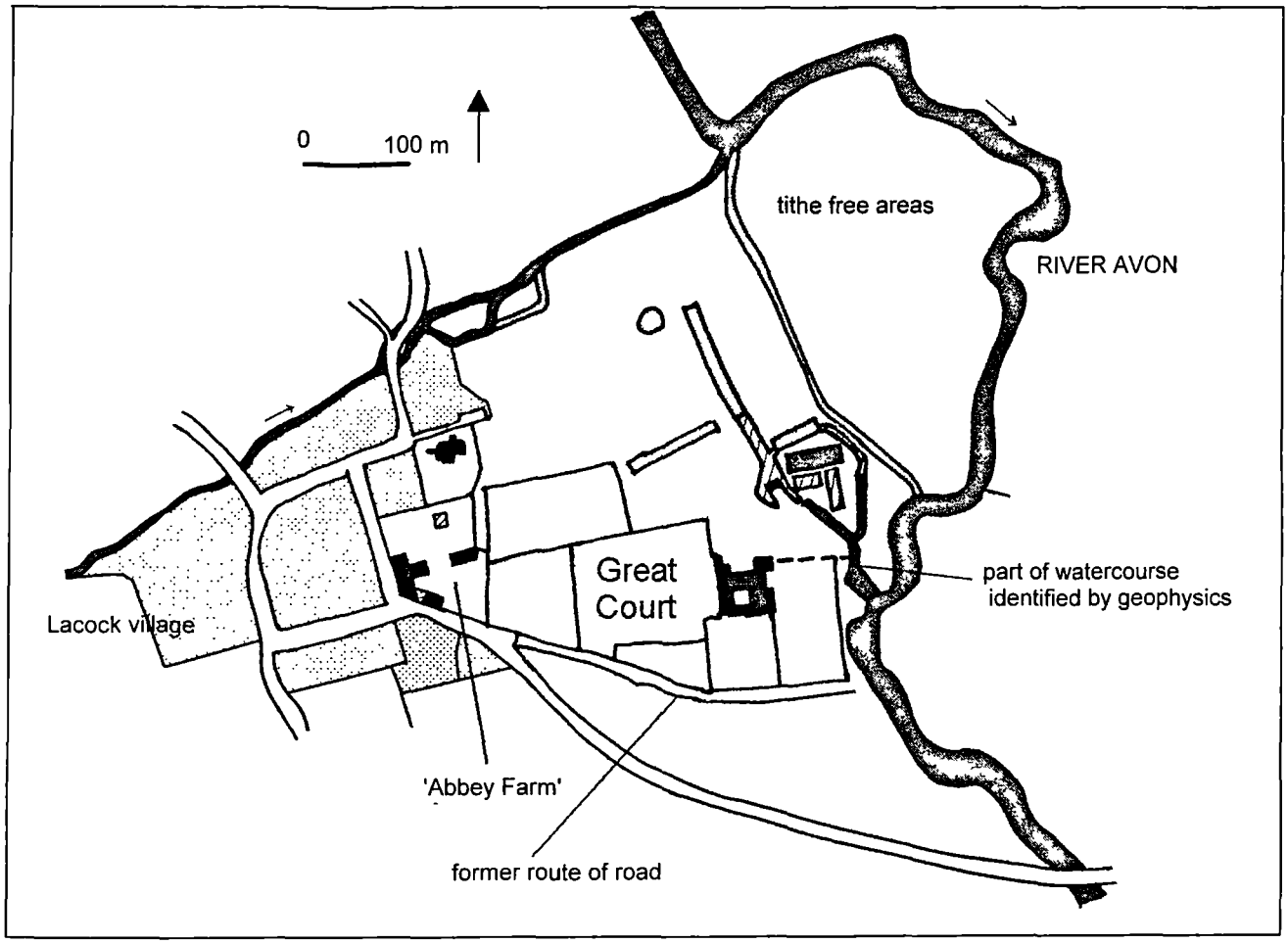


Figure 5.8 The precinct at Lacock Abbey

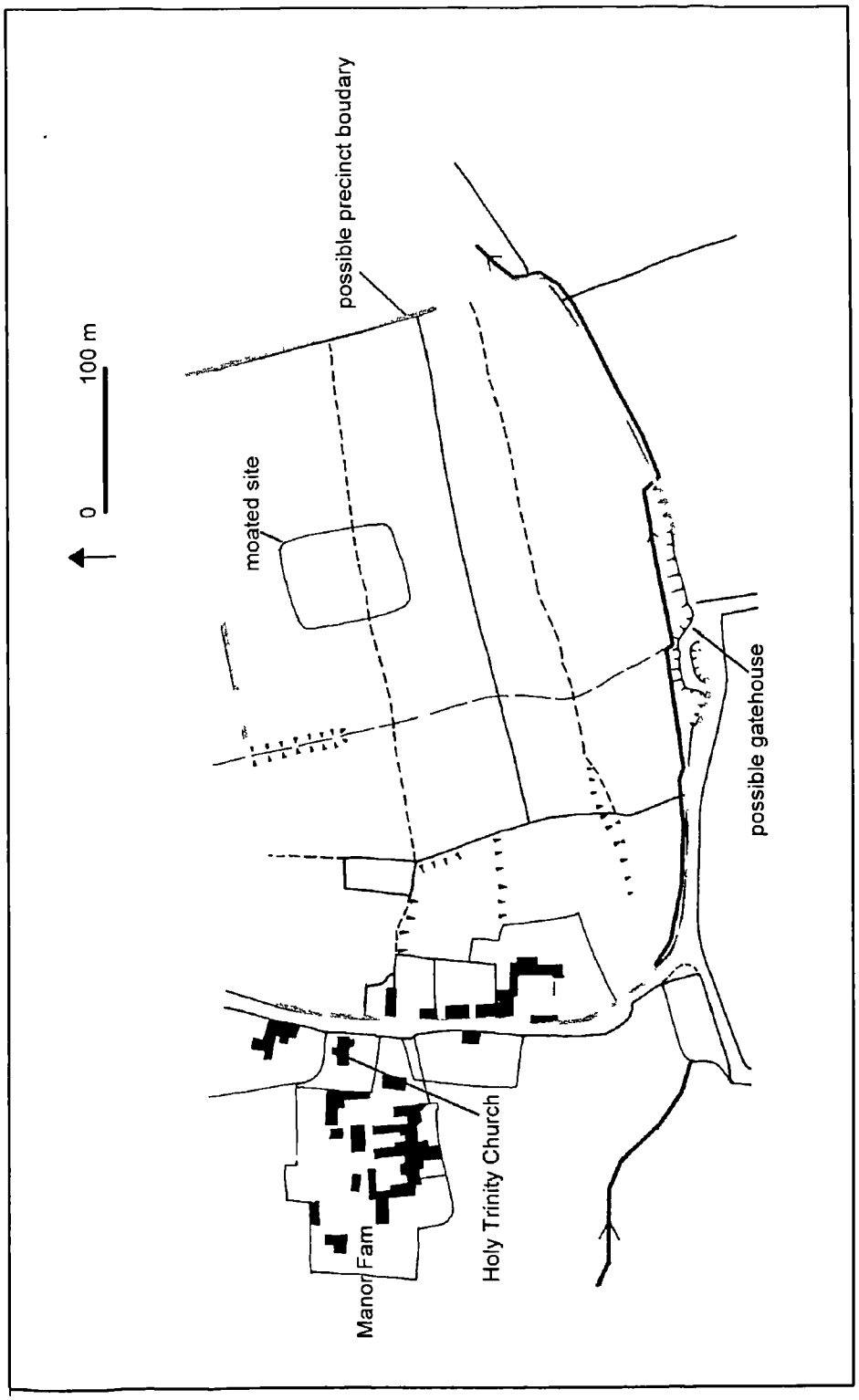


Figure 5.9 The precinct at Easton Royal Priory

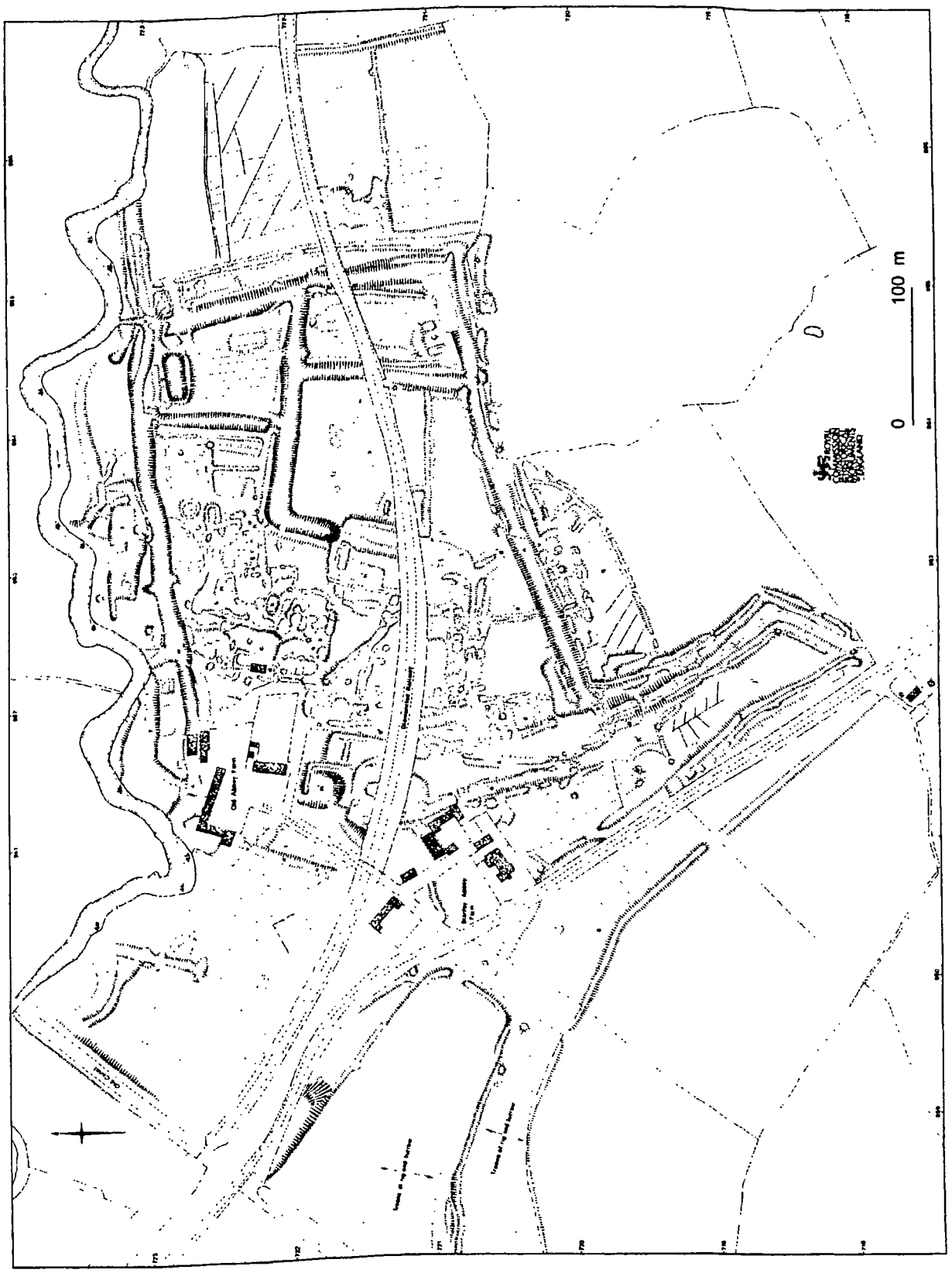


Figure 5.10 The precinct at Stanley Abbey (RCHME survey)

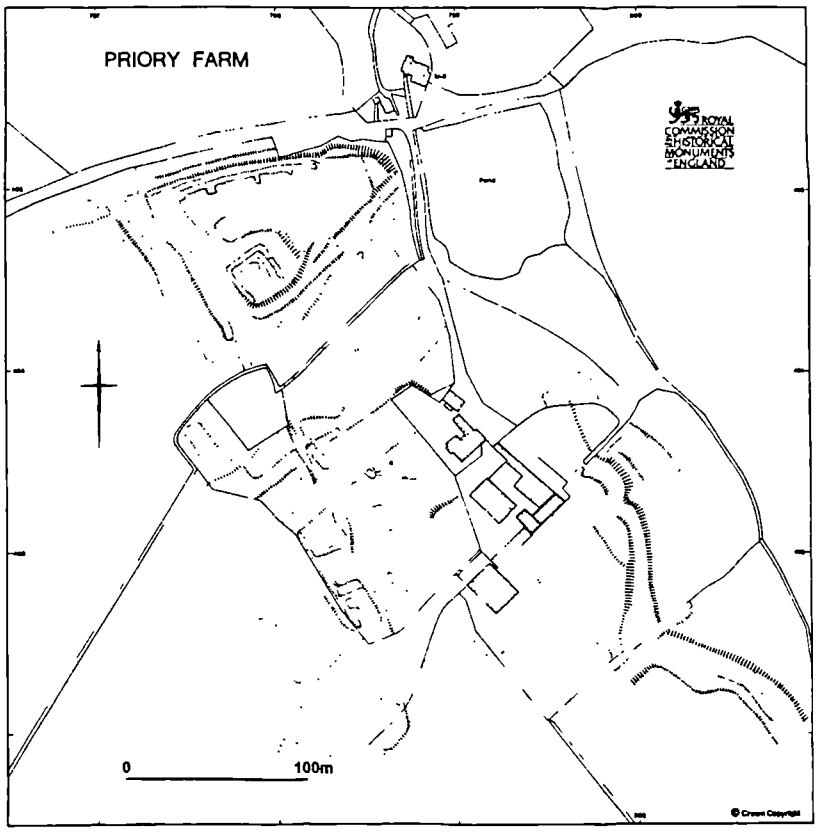


Figure 5.11 The precinct at Maiden Bradley (RCHME survey)

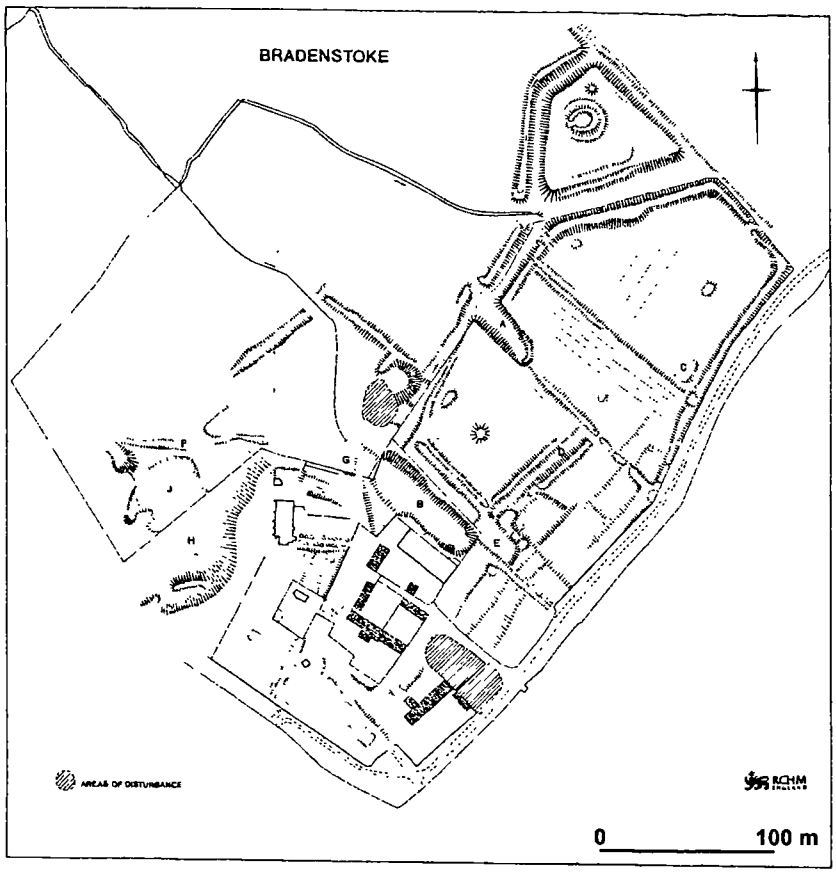


Figure 5.12 The precinct at Bradenstoke Priory (RCHME survey)

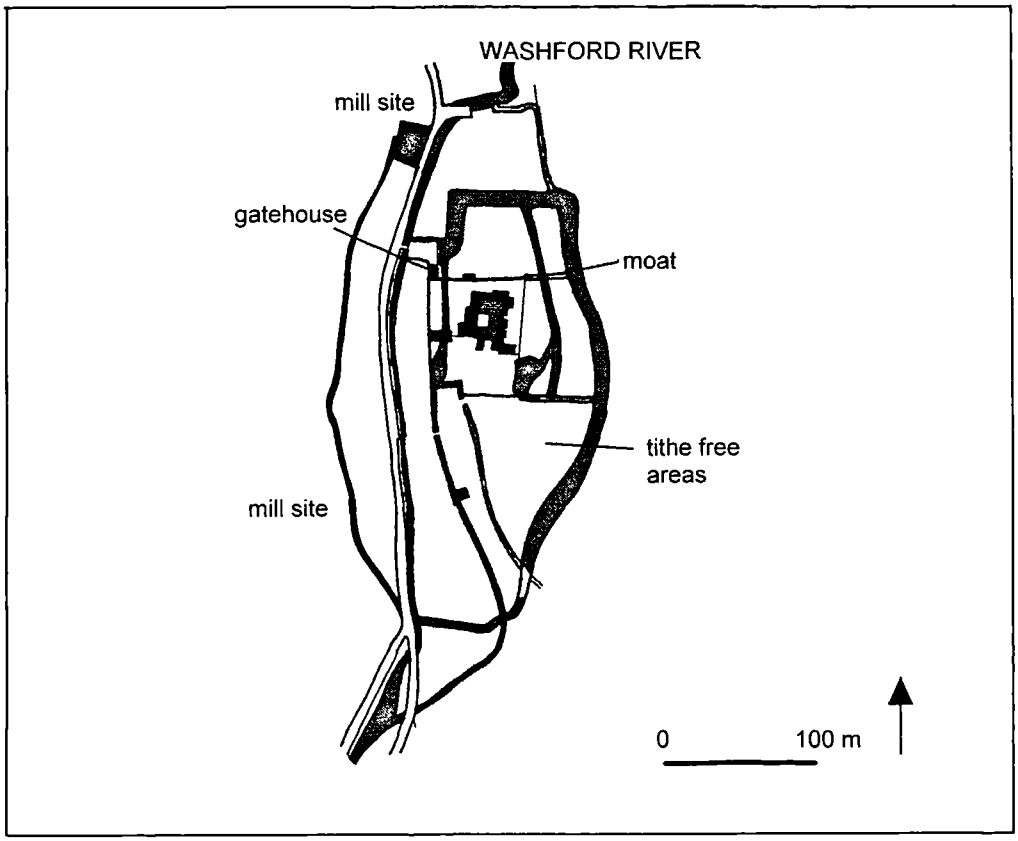


Figure 5.13 The precinct at Cleeve Abbey

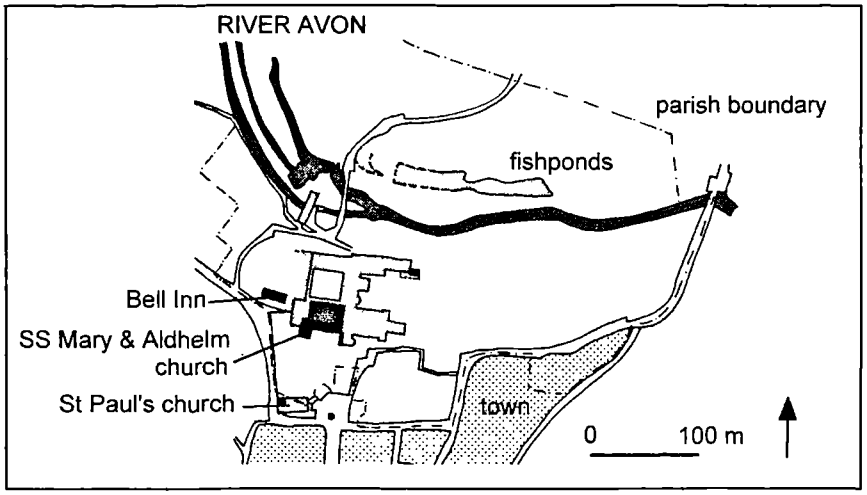


Figure 5.14 The precinct at Malmesbury Abbey

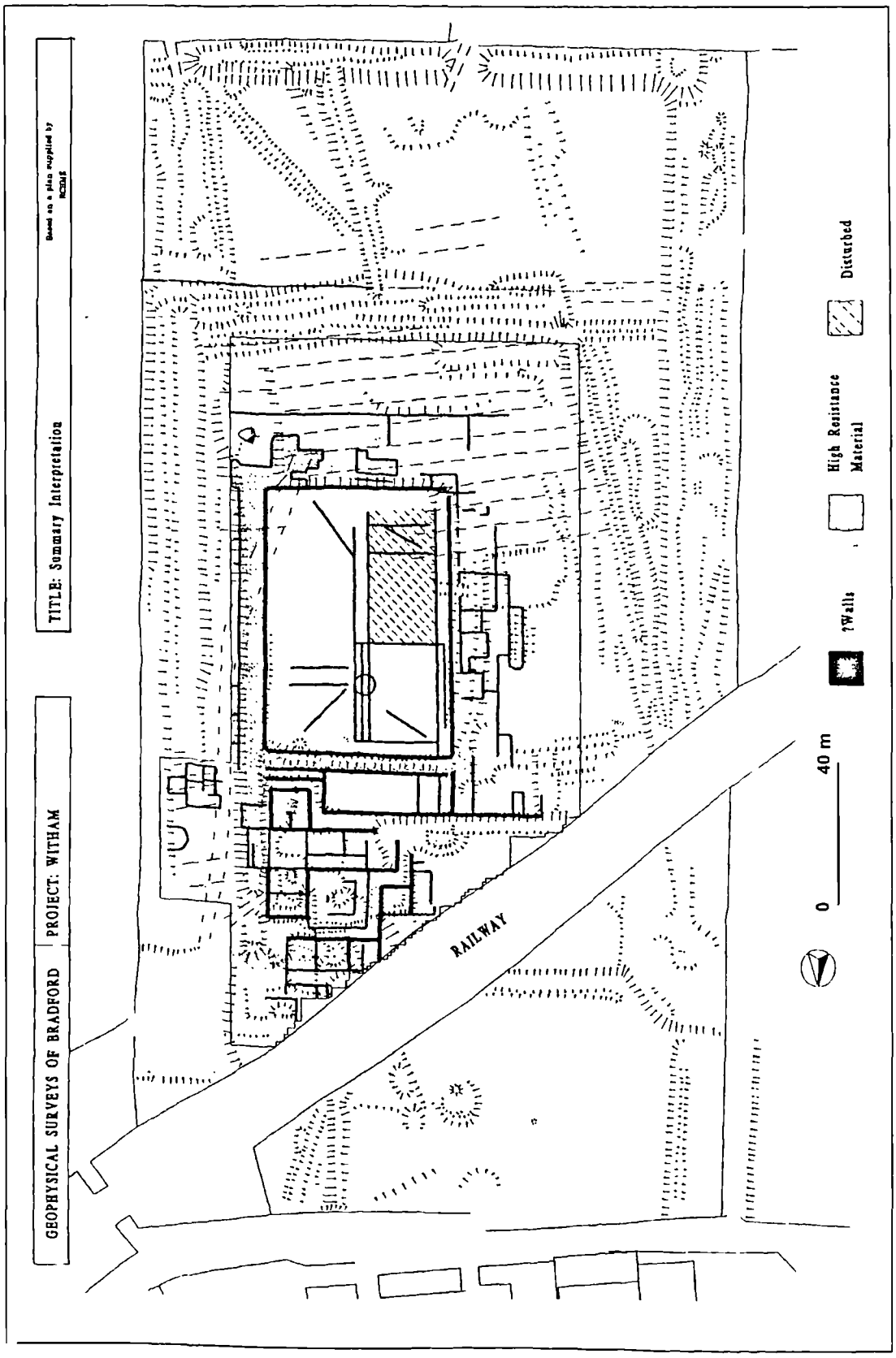


Figure 5.15 The precinct at Witham Charterhouse (from GSB 94/21)

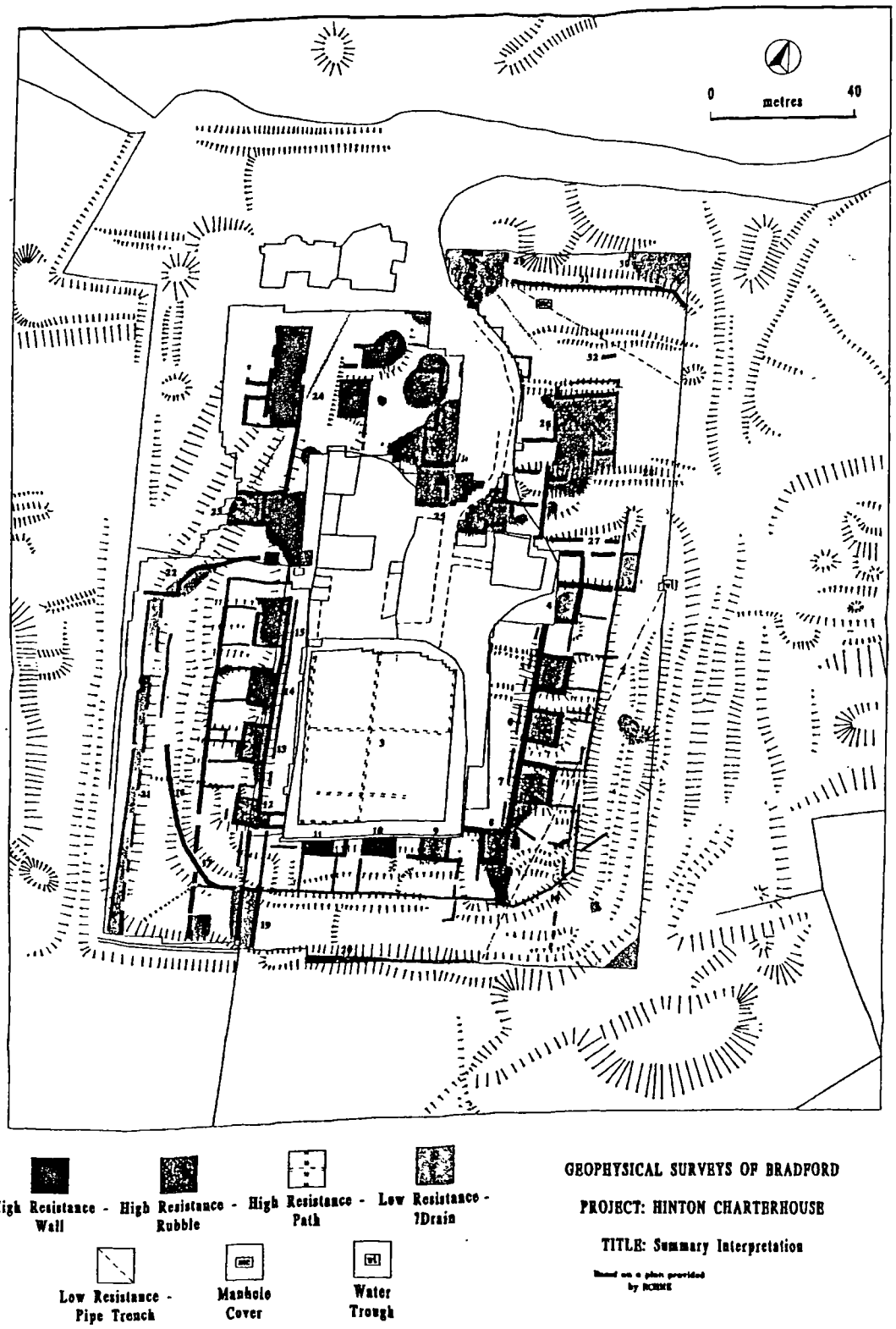


Figure 5.16 The precinct at Hinton Charterhouse (from GSB 95/49)

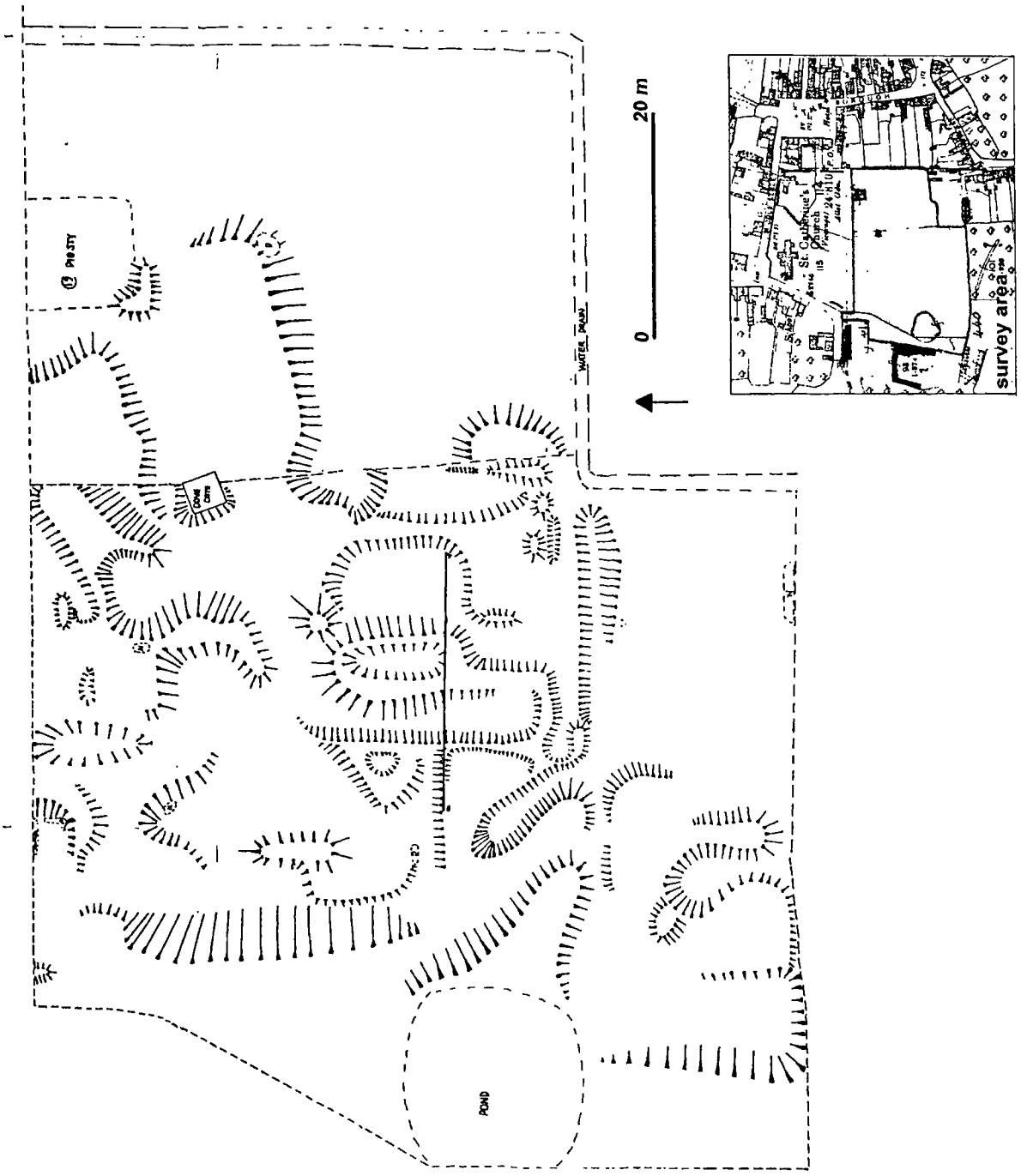


Figure 5.17 Earthworks within the precinct at Montacute Priory

6. SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF THE MONASTIC ECONOMY

6.1 Introduction

The sources for the study of the monastic economy of the region are varied and abundant, although far from consistent in their coverage of individual houses and monastic properties. This chapter provides a discussion of the key national sources used in this study[1]. Initially, the two medieval surveys specifically compiled to present a true assessment of ecclesiastical wealth, the Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV of 1291 and the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535 are discussed. Both have been used frequently in monastic and local history, and have been the subject of some recent research, which is discussed below. The historical circumstances of the compilation of each document is also outlined, with the implications for the reliability and substance of the information they contain. Finally, the use of the documents in the following chapters, and the issues concerning the perspective they provide about the monastic economy at different dates is discussed.

The documentary data generated by the nineteenth-century Tithe Commutation Act is a well known but, by virtue of its vast quantity and scope, greatly underused resource. The introduction to its use in the following chapters is unavoidably a lengthy one, because of its historical distance from the period under study. Unlike the 1291 Taxation and the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, it records former monastic property only as an aside or by implication, and thus the Post-Suppression history of tithe and land ownership, as well as the commutation process itself needs to be considered. The history of medieval tithe ownership by religious houses is a subject remarkably absent from recent research, and one with profound implications for the appearance of monastic information in the nineteenth-century data.

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[1] Cartularies and other sources relevant to individual houses are outlined in the gazetteer, Appendix 2.

6.2 The Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV 1291

6.2.1 History and significance of the survey

The Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV[2] is one of the few surviving extensive surveys of the Church in medieval England. It was compiled in 1291 as the culmination of a series of similar surveys, and was the definitive guide to ecclesiastical wealth until the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* taken before the Suppression in 1535 (Caley 1802). The source has often been considered unreliable and variable in its assessment, and for this reason, has not enjoyed the widespread study and use that the later document has (Robinson 1980: 113). However, its unique historical position justifies closer examination and consideration.

The right of the Monarch, at the instigation of the Papacy, to levy a tax on all Christian wealth for religious purposes was initially established in the mid-twelfth century to support the activities of the Crusaders in the Holy Land (Lunt 1926)[3]. By the end of the century, the principle of the fractional tax, set at a tenth (*decima*) or other proportion of any revenue, was familiar across the French and English kingdoms. Papal involvement in the Crusades was strong, and thus the precedent was set for Pope Innocent III to request a tax (of one fortieth) of all ecclesiastical income in 1199, and the initiative of raising tax to bolster papal income was repeated several times throughout the thirteenth century (Lunt 1926: 10).

The collection of a true proportion of ecclesiastical wealth obviously rested on an accurate assessment of that wealth, and it is in the mid-thirteenth century that distinctions between assessment standards and methods can be traced. Prior to 1254, we have little idea of how the taxes were estimated, although references to an

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[2] Hereafter referred to as the *Taxatio* for convenience.

[3] For comprehensive discussion of the origins and development of the Papal tenth see Lunt (1926) and for details about the 1291 *Taxatio* specifically, see Graham (1929: 271). The printed version of the manuscript also contains a brief introduction by Caley (1802). Robinson (1980) discussed the relevance and reliability of the Taxatio with respect to the Augustinian order. A recent project by the University of Manchester (Davnall et al 1992, Denton 1993) to computerize the spiritual data has tackled afresh many of the issues that feature in earlier discussions and presents a revised analysis of the compilation and reliability of the source.

Antiqua Taxatio (Lunt 1926: 48) suggest that at least one previous formal and recognized valuation did exist. The first levy for which detailed evidence survives is that of 1254, known as the Valuation of Norwich (ibid.). This assessment covers the dioceses of northern England and Wales, with fragments from other areas. However, it failed to dispel concern that it was not an accurate reflection of the wealth of the Church and was merely a repetition of older surveys (Graham 1929: 277), and the search for a true valuation continued. Edward I had been granted a clerical tenth in 1289 for six years, in return for undertaking a Crusade within three (ibid.: 281). Thus, the *Taxatio* was undertaken by episcopal representatives in each Archdeanery and completed in 1291 (Canterbury) and 1292 (York); it was specifically intended to investigate the wealth of the Church afresh and not rely on previous assessments (Caley 1802).

The *Taxatio* records, for every deanery and diocese, the value of the spiritual revenue generated by each benefice, and also the value of any temporal property owned by the ecclesiastical institutions in each parish. The structure of the document varies across the country, but for the deaneries in the West Country, little detail is given about this revenue. Very few of the temporal entries record anything other than the name of the monastic owner, the location of the property and its fiscal assessment. The revenue of each benefice is stated, and is often split between several institutions as well as the parish; the name of the institutions and their interest in the benefice (rector, pension or portion) are the only details provided, and no information about the incumbent is listed, unlike the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*.

The *Taxatio* is an important source for the study of the monastic economy because, like Domesday survey or the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, it is one of the few country-wide assessments of property in the Middle Ages. Furthermore, whatever its failing as a *verus valor* (see below) or detailed survey, the *Taxatio* was regarded as a definitive assessment of ecclesiastical wealth by government officials, and was in use, with amendments, until 1535 (Graham 1929). We cannot dismiss a source that influenced the public perception of monastic wealth for over two hundred years. It can be seen as one of the watersheds in the clerical economy, similar to the curtailing of tithe exemption for monastic houses in 1215, or the Statute of Mortmain of 1279, after which patrons required royal licence to donate property to religious houses. After

1291, any new property acquired by the clergy was considered secular for purposes of taxation, and thus the *Taxatio* defines the greatest legal extent of clerical property.

The late thirteenth century was a critical point in the development of monastic resources. Both the *Taxatio* and the Statute of Mortmain reflect a concern with the degree of ecclesiastical wealth, and attempts to curb it. By this date, the great phase of foundation and donation to the Church was over, and monasteries were instead consolidating their existing properties. The *Taxatio* thus portrays the monastic economy in a largely 'matured' form, and it is indeed striking how similar the data it contains is to that in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* in many cases (see Chapter 7).

6.2.2 Using the printed version

The printed *Taxatio* was published in 1802 by the Record Commission, from a number of original documents, and combines data from the 1291 and later surveys and amendments. Apparent shortcomings in its accuracy have been pointed out by several authors (Graham 1929: 271; Robinson 1980: 113) and it is a far from easy volume to use[4], but it remains the only printed version (apart from the data available through the University of Manchester, see below). The primary sources were two late fifteenth-century Exchequer copies of the returns, with additional material from earlier copies of the valuation (Caley 1802). In his introduction, Caley states that the original Diocesan rolls consulted contain several variations from the Exchequer copies, although 'they are however but few, and are of no great consideration; which circumstances evince the accuracy of the ancient transcripts' (ibid.). However, few authors have agreed with him on the overall accuracy of the printed version, because of its use of late sources, but also because of its poor editing, organization and many errors. There are numerous cases where alternative place name spellings and notes are provided, with no references. As Robinson points out, the index also suffers from inaccuracies and multiple spellings, and so a comprehensive search using it is difficult (1980: 116).

[4] See Robinson (1980: 116) for his comments on the use of the 1802 volume, and also Denton (1993), who provides valuable guidelines to the layout of each diocesan entry. Added items from later surveys in the printed source have been omitted from this study.

One practical advantage that the printed version of the *Taxatio* does have over the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* for the researcher, is that the format allows property within the region owned by monastic houses outside to be easily identified. Because the monastic temporalities and spiritualities are listed under the deanery they fall in, rather than the monastery they belong to (and thus would be found in the deanery the house itself falls in), a search of monastic property in the region, regardless of ownership, is easily achieved. The two sources in fact complement each other well, because identifying property in other counties owned by West Country houses is far easier in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, given the inadequate nature of the *Taxatio* index.

6.2.3 The *Taxatio* as *verus valor*

The *Taxatio* was intended to be a *verus valor* of the Church at the end of the thirteenth century, that is, to be an entirely new survey, not a reworking of previous assessments (Graham 1929: 281). Previous research has questioned its reliability as a *verus valor*, and queried how accurately and systematically the survey was carried out, in terms of the inclusion of properties and the level of their valuation. However, more recent research suggests that some, at least, of these problems can be solved by reanalysis of the interpretation of the information it contains.

There is no indication in the source itself what the totals it contains are, whether gross or net, or what elements of the revenue of each parish were included to calculate them. There are no definitions of the terms pension, portion and rector for the spiritual revenue, and the source offers little clue about how the complex balance of the different types of parochial income- tithes, property and other moneys- with its multiple owners, and the financial demands of the parish, was converted into a brief and deceptively simple total. Similarly, the existence of one figure for the entire monastic temporal revenue of a parish or manor indicates nothing of the nature of the property, or what value the sum represents- gross or net income, actual annual returns, or an estimate based on specific criteria such as rental value.

These issues have dominated earlier discussions, but they are partially illuminated by a series of papal instructions issued in the thirteenth century to regularize the collection of ecclesiastical taxes such as the 1291 one (Denton 1993). The

expectation that certain deductions would be made, such as revenue for the upkeep of the church fabric, means that the survey cannot be considered to include gross totals, but they were not true net totals either (ibid.). Instead, it seems likely that viewing the figures as the rateable value of each property is closest to their intended meaning (ibid.). Thus they represented the estimated value of the property if it was at farm, or the rental value if it was leased and the sum was considered fair (ibid.)[5]. The totals do not thus represent the actual or estimated annual return of the property or benefice in the year of the survey, and Graham suggests that our perception of the valuations in the survey as too low is due to modern misunderstanding of the source, rather than unreliability in the assessment (1929). It may have been a matter of 'common acceptance... that the notional farmed price, even more than any actual farmed price, would be much less than estimated net income' (Denton 1993: 241).

However, there is no doubt that the valuations for the south west region were low compared to the national picture presented by the survey. Robinson's (1980: 118) study of Augustinian valuations in 1291 demonstrates this clearly. This appears to be a genuine discrepancy in the source, and may be due to the regional nature of the survey and thus the methods used to assess each benefice. The use of an assessed rental value would have required a process of estimation that the use of an annual net value would not, and we know little about the mechanisms that influenced this (Denton 1993: 241). It may be that the method used in the south west resulted in lower valuations than that used in other regions.

The quantitative number of manors and benefices listed for each monastic house has also been queried in comparison with other records. The source has been demonstrated to miss out properties known to have been in monastic ownership at this date, particularly spiritualities, for which Robinson noted that the ownership of a full rectory, pension or portion by a monastery in the source does not always reflect the correct status known from other sources (1980: 114). However, whilst there are undoubtedly examples of omission, some of which cannot easily be explained, in many cases, re-interpretation of the remit of the survey and individual circumstances means that reasons for this omission can often be suggested. For example, where a

[5] Previous debate has focused heavily on this issue and its implications for the use of the source (Lunt 1926, Graham 1929, Robinson 1980). Denton's (1993) article presents the most recent and plausible reanalysis of the evidence, particularly the papal instructions referred to.

benefice was at farm, it was the lessee who was liable for taxation rather than the monastic owner, and thus it does not necessarily appear as a monastic benefice in the source (Denton 1993: 238). The absence of spiritual revenue for Cleeve Abbey can be partially explained in this way, its rectory at Queen Camel having been at farm for many years. The separate valuation of temporal and spiritual property may explain several discrepancies in the source. None of the three smallest nunneries in the region, Barrow Gurney, Cannington and Kington St Michael, have any temporal revenue recorded. The two latter houses are both known to have owned temporal possessions at this date from other sources, which have been omitted from the survey. It is proposed that the nunneries were exempt from taxation on account of poverty, and thus no specific examination of their temporalities took place, but that their ecclesiastical property slipped through in the general survey of spiritualities[6]. Their valuations should therefore be regarded as incomplete.

The exact definition of the terms portion and pension can be interpreted with reference to the thirteenth-century papal instructions discussed above (Denton 1993: 237). Each represented a partial share in parochial revenues. The key distinction appears to have been whether the value of the monastic fraction of the benefice was subject to price fluctuation (portion), or whether the house was in receipt of a fixed money payment (pension) (ibid.: 239). By the end of the eleventh century, tithe revenue was commonly divorced from the full ownership of the benefice and fractions of the tithe were commonly granted as endowments to monastic houses (Blair 1991: 148). The portion was probably most commonly associated with a share of the tithe revenue, whilst a fixed pension could be received in lieu of tithe or any other interest in the benefice (Graham 1929: 273). Graham (1929) and Robinson (1980) have both provided more specific definitions of the two terms[7]. However, in

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[6] Scott Holmes (1911: 109) states that 'Cannington, on account of its poverty, escaped assessment' in 1291, but it is unclear whether this is taken from an unreferenced document or inferred from the priory's absence in the survey, the author presumably being unaware of its single Dorset entry.

[7] Robinson's definition probably places too much emphasis on the formal processes of appropriation and advowson, i.e. the interpretation of the pension as a fixed payment derived from the rector when the monastery held the advowson but not appropriation of the benefice, and the portion as an appropriated fraction of revenue. This does not recognize the potential for monasteries to hold tithe revenue without full appropriation. Graham's interpretation that a pension was obtained when the monastic revenue was permanently at farm to an appointed rector, or if another monastic institution appropriated the benefice (i.e. became rector), in which case other institutions would surrender their portion and receive a pension instead, is

this study, a more flexible interpretation is favoured, with both representing a share of spiritual revenue, either a genuine share of its annual revenue (portion) or a fixed sum (pension) in lieu of it. There is a definite geographical variation in recording portions and pensions across Somerset and Wiltshire (see section 7.4.2), but whether this represents genuine differences in monastic practice or the survey record is unclear.

In conclusion, whilst the evidence in the *Taxatio* must be treated with care, careful analysis of the individual circumstances of each monastic house in the survey allows an assessment of the reliability of its valuation and places it in context. The *Taxatio* was an important administrative and fiscal source in the Middle Ages and was formulated with the intention of being a true survey of the wealth of the Church, and as such merits attention as a national document containing wide-scale and broadly comparative data concerning the monastic economy.

6.3 The Wealth of the Church 1535

6.3.1 History of the survey and its significance

The survey known as the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* was a fundamental part of the process of religious reform and political change which resulted in the Suppression of the Monasteries in 1536[8]. It was carried out as a result of the Act of First Fruits and Tenths (1534), which had been passed to reorganize the customary tax paid to the Papacy by the ecclesiastical institutions of England and Wales (Youings 1971). Henry VIII, head of the Church of England following the Act of Supremacy, had used the second Act to direct not only the traditional first fruits- the revenue of the first year of any benefice- into his treasury, but also to impose a tax of one tenth on all

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similarly too specific, and there are many cases in the survey where this definition is not confirmed by the evidence.

[8] The primary study remains Savine (1909), a monumental analysis of the national monastic economy based on the data in the survey. The printed version of the manuscript contains a detailed introduction to the compilation of the source (Caley et al 1810-34, vol. 6), and there are numerous studies available which outline the historical context of its compilation, particularly Knowles (1961), Youings (1971) and for the West Country, Bettey (1989).

ecclesiastical property (ibid.). A comprehensive survey was authorized to replace those in use which were based on much earlier assessments, particularly the *Taxatio*, and a new *verus valor* of the wealth of the Church was compiled.

Commissioners were appointed to carry out the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* and set out around the country at the end of January 1535 (Knowles 1959: 242). The returns were made in the spring and summer months and the final document compiled in the winter of the same year (Bettey 1989: 23). The commissioners were appointed county by county, and consisted largely of local gentry and administrators, under the supervision of the local Bishop (ibid.). The orders of the commissioners are preserved and were very simple- to visit all of the monasteries and view cartularies and papers and consult officials in order to list all the properties of the houses, temporal and spiritual, to assess their income and outlay (Caley et al 1934: 6,ii)[9].

Without doubt, the significance of the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* to monastic studies lies in the historical circumstance of its composition and the subsequent Dissolution process. The course of history- the wholesale removal of the monasteries and redistribution of the wealth represented in the survey- means that it has become the pivotal assessment of land and property during the end of the monastic economy and the creation of a new Tudor landscape. The detail included in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, its relative uniformity and care in compilation, as well as the large quantity of information concerning its construction, execution and aftermath, also recommends it to a prominent place as a source of national relevance and importance. The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* can be likened to Domesday Book in that its seemingly simple format and omnipresence in local history disguises the complexity and ambiguity of some of the information it contains. It lacks the wide-ranging critical attention that Domesday Book has received; a serious omission that does not reflect its potential as both a national and local source for monastic history.

[9] They were, of course, also charged with valuing secular benefices and institutions.

6.3.2 Using the printed version

A printed edition of the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* was first published in 1810, as part of the Record Commission Series (Caley et al 1810-1834). It consists of five volumes of data, arranged by diocese and indexed by place name and personal name, and a sixth volume containing a historical introduction and useful indexes. All of the individual possessions of the monastery are thus considered together in one entry, rather than under the deanery they fall in, following standard medieval accounting practice (Richardson 1961). Thus each monastic entry consists of a series of place names, with details of the types and amounts of revenue accumulated at each location, and overall, the entries are remarkably consistent.

Each monastic entry consists of three items for each house- spiritual and temporal revenue and expenditure, to provide a gross and net taxable income. Although every house contains these elements, the format for recording them varies, and thus in a few cases, it is not possible to ascertain if property is considered spiritual or temporal. Similarly, in some entries expenditure can be attributed to the property from which it is extracted, in other cases it is drawn from the monastic budget as a whole. The majority of entries (all of the Somerset houses and five of the Wiltshire ones[10]) record the composition of manorial estates in a formulaic and brief way, whereas the remaining Wiltshire houses are surveyed in more detail, and more information can be gained about the structure of their estates.

6.3.3 The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* as *verus valor*

In the light of the subsequent Suppression of the Monasteries, it has been suggested that Henry, or certainly his minister Cromwell, fully intended the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* as the preliminary stage of the Suppression (Knowles 1959: 203). This would of course have implications for its reliability as an impartial assessment of ecclesiastical wealth. Certainly, it was part of a wider process of reform of the religious houses, and there had been earlier suggestions and precedents for closure. Wolsey had

[10] Easton Royal, Edington, Marlborough, Monkton Farleigh and Stanley

'tidied up' the smaller monasteries in 1525-30 (Knowles 1959: 157), and many monasteries, generally those in financial debt or with small numbers of inmates had been suppressed. Longleat in Wiltshire, for example, was suppressed in 1529 (LPHenryVIII, 4/2502: Brewer 1872). Even before then, the removal of the alien priories had provided an example of how monastic wealth could be redistributed at a wide-scale. A calendared document of November 1534 survives which outlines a model for directing monastic revenue to the king (LPHVIII, 7/1355: Gairdner 1883), but nothing specific was accomplished until December 1534, when the first sessions of visitations to enquire into the state of the monasteries had been carried out. After this, the suppression process gathered momentum rapidly.

Although it is possible that reform rather than closure was intended, it was unlikely. Evidence such as the extreme treatment of the charterhouse at Sheen, indicates a lack of interest in spiritual reform or regeneration, because the efficient destruction of political opposition within the monasteries often meant crippling the institutions of strongest spiritual strength. Whilst Henry may have entertained notions of religious revival, the Suppression was above all a financially-driven process, and to obtain monastic revenue required the closure of the houses (ibid.). Evidence, such as the widespread leasing of estates undertaken by some monasteries in the months immediately prior to the Suppression (Hoyle 1989), suggests that officials within the monasteries themselves were well aware of potential closure.

The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* must therefore be considered within a primarily financial context, and one in which both the commissioners and the monastic officials they investigated were probably aware of the overall political climate and the purpose for which the survey might be intended. Scholars have suggested that because of this, as well as the fact that it was a taxation document, information was deliberately withheld from the royal commissioners by monastic officials. In the West Country for example, the abbot of Cleeve complained that the assessment of his house was lower than its real value (Bettey 1989: 26).

However, some scholars have commented on the care and thoroughness with which the document was compiled (Youings 1955: xxxiii), and its overall comprehensive-ness and efficiency (Bettey 1989: 23). The zeal of the survey and suppression commissioners has often been remarked upon, and their desire to root out the full

extent of monastic property (ibid.). Comparison of the survey commissioners and the officials employed by the monasteries at the same date (see section 6.3.4) leaves no doubt that the commissioners were uniquely well qualified to provide a sound assessment of monastic wealth.

In conclusion, although there were undoubtedly errors and omissions- for example, Kingswood (Gloucestershire) was omitted erroneously because of confusion concerning its location as a detached part of Wiltshire- on the whole, the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* was compiled to the most accurate standards it could be, and the resulting document reflects this. There are also, just as for the *Taxatio*, certain ambiguities and omissions in the information it contains- such as the inclusion of woodland and demesne tithes, and the recognition of manorial status in the survey (Savine 1909). It has been criticized as a 'crude' measure of monastic property (Prosser 1995: 200), but it is perhaps more productive to view it as it as a heavily condensed picture of the monastic economy in 1535, providing sound comparative data at a national level.

6.3.4 The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* commissioners

The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* was carried out by groups of commissioners, who were generally under the leadership of the Bishop of the relevant diocese (Bettey 1989: 26). Each group surveyed two or more deaneries, depending on their size. For fourteen of the Somerset houses and three of the Wiltshire ones, the commissioners who surveyed the monastery are specifically indicated, and five circuits of commissioners can be extracted from this information (Table 4, Appendix1). Tentative suggestions for the remaining houses can be made on the basis of the circuits used to survey each deanery, although the existence of different commissioners for the deanery of Malmesbury and some of the monasteries within it suggests that the religious houses were valued separately. It is suggested that these circuits did affect the nature of the data in the survey, and they are referred to in the subsequent discussion. In particular, the fiscal valuations and character of the surveys of Circuit 1 in western Somerset is markedly different to the rest of the region.

The commission drew upon men from the local gentry and aristocracy to perform the survey, and this was the same pool of administrative and social expertise already employed within the monastic economy. Comparison of the list of commissioners with the employed officials in the expenditure of each monastery in the survey confirms the dual position of many of these men, which has implications for their knowledge and partiality in carrying out the valuations. The example of Sir John Horsey exemplifies this. He was chief steward to Montacute Priory in 1535, which was one of the three monasteries he surveyed at that date, and five years later, was in the possession of the lease on monastic property previously belonging to Hinton Charterhouse.

6.4 The nineteenth-century tithe maps

6.4.1 Introduction and previous research

In 1836 the Act for the Commutation of Tithes was passed, in order to standardize a taxation system which had become unwieldy and convoluted after many centuries of use, and somewhat compromized by recent enclosure acts and other agricultural reforms (Evans 1976). The aim of the Act was to commute all surviving tithes to single cash payments and effectively extinguish variability of assessment and payment. To this end, a complete survey of all land ownership, tithe ownership and tithe payment was carried out to accompany the Act, and this still exists as a substantial body of data about the economic and topographic landscape of the nineteenth century.

The use of the tithe awards and the accompanying maps is well-known for local history of all types, and particularly for the examination of nineteenth-century economy and agriculture (*Kain & Prince 1985*). They are frequently used for identifying topographic and toponymic features of the pre-twentieth-century landscape, particularly place names, and as a basic starting point for pre-modern boundaries and ecclesiastical divisions. However, less research has been carried out concerning their implication for the study of the medieval landscape in general and the monastic economy in particular.

Platt demonstrated the potential of the 'relatively unexploited' tithe schedules and maps for reconstructing the estates of the Cistercians in Northern England in his landmark reassessment of the monastic grange (1969: 57). He plotted the tithe-free land that was associated with known monastic farms on the nineteenth-century maps, and concluded that they represented the compact areas of consolidated demesne land farmed by the granges. Little published work on the topic has followed, but what has been carried out has yielded impressive results. Much of Williams' work on the Cistercians in Wales (1976; 1984; 1990) has used tithe exemption to great effect in the investigation of grange lands. Moorhouse has used tithe maps to reconstruct pastoral grazing areas in a similar way in West Yorkshire[11].

The importance of these examples lies in the level of detail they bring to the monastic landscape, allowing analysis to progress from the broad-brush distribution of known estates, to their physical extent and organization at a local level. They can in many ways be considered a method of bridging the difficult gap between detailed documentary studies of the monastic estate as a fiscal and economic entity and the archaeological analysis of the physical landscape of settlement and activity. Off-setting this, the drawback to their use in reconstructing the monastic landscape is clearly the depth of time between the creation of the estates and the drawing up of the survey in the nineteenth century. The fossilized snapshot portrayed on the tithe maps must be viewed in the widest possible context of agricultural and ecclesiastical reform both before and after the Suppression, in order to make use of the information they contain.

The published work on the landscape implications of the tithe maps has concentrated on monastic exemption from tithe payment, particularly that enjoyed by the Cistercians, and consideration of the historical context of this exemption has been brief. However, study of the maps and schedules for the West Country has suggested that the information they contain about monastic land and tithes is far more wide-ranging and complex than these studies suggest[12]. Because of this, it has been felt necessary to include a discussion of both medieval tithes and post-

[11] Annual Conference of the Society for Landscape Studies 1997.
[12] Both Platt (1969) and Courtney (1980) touch upon the wider implications of tithe map studies in terms of their historical context and extension of their use to other orders, but it has not been fully explored.

Suppression tithe reform, in order to place the subsequent tithe map study in a firmer context.

6.4.2 History of monastic tithes

The early development of tithes

The system whereby a tithe, or tenth, of the produce and labour on any land was claimed by the Church developed at an early date in Europe. In continental Europe, tithes are known in Frankish kingdoms as early as the sixth century, and certainly the practice had become widespread enough for Charlemagne to institute secular laws concerning them in 779 (Constable 1964)[13]. In England, there is little evidence for tithe collection being a common or standard practice until the mid-tenth century (ibid.). However, the difference between the religious theory of tithe payment, secular legislation to enforce it, and actual practice is a considerable one. In the early medieval period, we know little about the practice of tithe collection, and as Constable suggests, it is likely that the legislation which survives reflects a formalization of earlier practice (ibid.). Tithe payment evolved in tandem with the minster structure, and much of the legislation known appears to have been targeted at enforcing payment, and directing it to the correct minster. A law of Edgar in the tenth century tackled this problem and attempted to stem the flow of tithes to younger churches instead of minsters. However, by the tenth century, it appears that any pastoral church could receive tithes (ibid.).

As both major landowners and well-established spiritual powers, monasteries found themselves in a peculiar position with respect to tithes. They operated on both sides

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[13] Literature on medieval tithes is more scarce than the importance of the issue in contemporary society would lead one to expect. Constable's *Monastic Tithes* (1964) remains the key text. It examines the development of monastic tithes across Europe before the twelfth century, and looks at the implications of tithe payment as part of the greater medieval debate about the roles of the papacy, secular and regular clergy. Constable (1979) contains essays on tithes and monastic possession of *spiritualia*. Several general studies (Hill 1956, Savine 1909, Knowles 1963) rely heavily on eighteenth and nineteenth literature on medieval tithes generated during debate about tithe reform, particularly Selden (1776), and must thus be treated with reservation.

of tithe transactions, being both tithe owners and tithe payers. By the appropriation of parish churches, or by gift, monasteries owned tithes, and thus collected the revenue, that is a proportion of the produce derived from cultivated land, across all their appropriated parishes, which often amounted to considerable sums. Theoretically, this was revenue designated for the benefit of the parish church, rather than the monastery in general. Secondly, as landowners, monasteries were required to pay tithes on their lands to the relevant parish church, just as any other landowners were. These two factors merit separate discussion, because they profoundly influenced monastic tithes and spiritual revenue in different ways.

Monastic tithe ownership

Tithes originated for the benefit of the parochial church and its clergy. Thus tithes were due to the parish church in question directly, and could be distributed for the good of the cleric, his episcopal superior, the church fabric or for charitable purposes. On this theological premise, it was impossible for monastic churches to own tithes, unless they fulfilled a pastoral function. However, from an early date, perhaps as early as the ninth century in Europe, tithes were coming to be regarded as a property capable of gift or devolution, and monasteries, as well as lay persons were beginning to be granted tithe revenue. This was a matter largely of custom, rather than a move generated by legislation or theological argument (Constable 1964). The gift of tithe revenue or portions of it was common in England by the end of the eleventh century (Blair 1991: 148). Moreover, the appropriation of parish churches by monastic houses meant that monasteries became responsible for pastoral matters, and thus became the legitimate owners of tithes. Similarly, the practice of lay patronage and appropriation of churches, and thus secular tithe ownership was common up until the early eleventh century. The issue became part of the great wave of spiritual reform at his date, and it was considered that tithes were becoming 'secularized' by their combination with lay land ownership and economic transactions. Monastic houses were thus in a strong position to benefit from the donation of tithes and church patronage from secular patrons at this date (Constable 1964).

However, there was strong objection to monastic tithe ownership within the secular church, as well as within the reformed monastic orders (see below). On theological grounds, it was argued that monks, because they were not necessarily clerics, should not receive tithes, and that monastic tithe ownership was in effect 'secularising' monasteries, rather than 'spiritualising' tithes. The financial deprivation caused to the secular church was undoubtedly another factor, as was the political struggle between the two churches. Monastic tithe ownership represented a loss of control over ecclesiastical matters by the bishoprics and emphasized the independent position of many of the monasteries within the religious structure. However, theological and political arguments aside, by the twelfth century, monastic acquisition of tithes was common place, and continued to be so until the Dissolution.

The canonical orders were in a slightly different position with respect to tithe ownership compared to the other orders. Because they were expected to fulfil a pastoral role and were ordained clerics as well as monks, their acquisition of tithes was seen as more theologically acceptable. Although the reformed orders of canons, such as the Premonstratensians, eschewed tithes at their foundation, in reality they were freely holding spiritual possessions by the mid-twelfth century as well (Colvin 1951: 272). The Augustinians were particularly associated with church ownership and pastoral matters and the high proportion of their income that was derived from spiritual revenue means that tithes play a correspondingly significant role in their overall economy. Robinson has estimated that 40% of Augustinian income nationally in 1291 was derived from spiritual revenue, and high proportion of this would have been tithes (1980: 110).

There was objection to monastic tithe ownership from within, as well as without, the regular clergy of the reformed orders. The new orders of the twelfth century rejected ties with the secular world, and this included tithe revenue, which was becoming increasingly enshrined in secular and canon law. They did not accept parish churches as gifts, nor allowed their churches a pastoral function and thus could not possess tithes by appropriation, and their acquisition by gift would have been inappropriate. Thus the prohibition on the ownership of both churches and tithes was written into the constitution of many new orders. The Cistercians and Carthusians, as well as Fontevraultines all forbade tithe ownership, and the Grandmontines went

even further, not even permitting themselves to retain tithes from their demesne, as most orders did (see below) (Constable 1964).

However, the rejection of tithes meant the loss of a lucrative source of revenue. The donation of churches and transfer of tithes was a popular gift by patrons, probably because it involved little loss of income to themselves, and perhaps because tithes were felt to be an appropriate spiritual sustenance for religious houses. Thus the acquisition of tithes by new orders became a matter of practice triumphing over legislation or theological argument. It has been suggested that the introduction of Savigniac houses into the Cistercian family, who were permitted to keep the churches they possessed, led to contravention and laxity concerning church ownership rules, as early as the 1140s (Burton 1994: 247). Certainly by 1170, Pope Alexander III felt it necessary to reprimand English houses on this point (Knowles 1963: 355) and church and tithe gifts became fairly common. English houses appear to have transgressed on this point far more than any other nationality.

Thus, by the end of the twelfth century, 'a considerable proportion of all the tithe paid by Christians were given to monasteries' (Constable 1964. 109), not only to the older houses, but to the reformed orders to some extent as well.

Monastic exemption from tithe payment

Monastic exemption from tithe payment was a contentious issue and clearly one where ecclesiastical authorities found themselves with a conflict of interest between the secular and monastic clergies. Monasteries sought exemption from tithe payment from an early date and considerable theological debate continued through the early Middle Ages on the subject. Two points are worth noting about the debate; firstly that it was theoretically impossible to be exempt from something due to the parish churches by divine right, and so 'exempt' was shorthand for monasteries retaining tithes and distributing it themselves for parochial or charitable purposes. Secondly, throughout the Middle Ages, it was primarily applied to monastic demesne and newly cleared land. Even for the new houses and exempt orders, land worked by the tenantry was expected to yield tithes, although often special tithe transactions were

carried out on this land[14]. The argument for exemption was thus the same as that for acquisition: should monks be allowed to retain tithes in the same way as ordained priests, or were they obliged to pay, as any other secular landowner was?

There was objection to monastic tithe-exemption within the Church from the secular clergy, because the loss of tithe revenue was a serious consideration in both financial and theological terms. Tithes were considered to have been instituted by divine right, and exemption on any grounds was seen as contravention of a universal obligation to pay tithes (Knowles 1963: 355). Clearly, the secular church was anxious not to lose the considerable revenue that was due in tithes from the extensive monastic lands throughout the country. The negative attitude of the secular clergy is reflected in the edicts of the Fourth Lateran Council (see below), where the secular prelates were commanded to act with more care to uphold those tithe privileges which were enjoyed by the monasteries (Rothwell 1975: 667).

Despite these arguments, the retention of demesne tithes by monastic orders became commonplace. Not only was it considered appropriate for monasteries to own tithes from their own labour by some theologians, but in practice, their appropriation of parish churches often meant that they were paying tithes to themselves. In this situation, although the tithes did not cease to exist, they became merged with land ownership and were swallowed up in the overall monastic economy.

The new orders claimed exemption because of their disassociation from parochial matters. They played no pastoral role in the parish, which perhaps justified this claim. The clearance of large areas of new land by these orders was also cited as a reason for freedom from tithes, *although the application of noval tithes to these estates* became a far from simple argument.

Finally, the privilege of exemption from tithes was one that could be granted by Papal decree and the relationship between the Papacy and the monastic orders was a factor in the acquisition of exemptions. This relationship varied throughout the eleventh and twelfth century as the attitude and pressures upon the Papacy waxed

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[14] See Williams (1984: 241). For example, Cwmhir paid 1/13th of tithe on its non-demesne lands at some granges.

and waned[15]. Certainly the close relationship between the reformed Papacy and the new orders inspired privileges of exemption and although the needs of the secular clergy had to be met, and large scale tithe-exemption would have reduced their revenue intolerably, there was clearly a pressure or desire to grant exemption to monasteries as a papal favour. There is a long series of edicts relating to this subject throughout the medieval period, particularly from Innocent II (1130-43) who granted order-wide freedoms to many of the new houses (Constable 1964). The Cistercians were granted exemption from tithe payment by Innocent II on land cultivated directly in 1132, and they vigorously defended this privilege (Knowles 1963: 355). This was extended to Premonstratensian houses in 1139 and many other orders, particularly the Carthusians and Military orders, throughout the twelfth century.

Tithes and the Lateran Council of 1215

Through these various mechanisms, either by general Papal exemption for whole orders or individual houses, or by church appropriation or just through local custom, many houses did not pay tithes on their demesne land by the end of the twelfth century. However, growing protest throughout the church meant that legislation to limit tithe exemption privileges began, and the monastic orders themselves were beginning to recognize that wrangles over non-payment were damaging to themselves (Constable 1964).

Therefore, the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 contained several edicts designed to simplify the escalating problem of monastic tithe exemption and tithe payment in general[16]. It was an attempt to tighten up the number of exemption privileges granted, and appease both secular and monastic churches. The edicts first made clear the duty of all Christians to pay tithes on cultivated land directly to the parish incumbent for the benefit of the church, *and not to the monastic house,* where it was overlord (Rothwell 1975: 668). This tackled the issue that monastic houses, and sometimes secular priests, were diverting tithe revenue and parochial business (such

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[15] See Morris (1989) on the changing relationship between the Papacy and the monastic orders during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

[16] Early and widely used accounts that deal with monastic tithe payment, particularly Savine (1909) and Grove (1896) display considerable discrepancies in their knowledge and interpretation of these edicts, and thus this section is considered necessary.

as burial rights) on their lands to their own use generally, rather than reserving tithe revenue for its intended parochial purpose.

The most important edict (55) however concerns the Cistercian payment of tithes. It attempted to stem the flow of tithe exemption privileges, by effectively revoking the earlier grant of Innocent II, but softened the blow by allowing existing exempt land to remain. Thus, 'on all future acquisitions, even if they cultivate them with their own hands or at their own expense, they shall pay tithes to the churches to which because of the lands they were previously paid' (Rothwell 1975: 667). Some attempt was made to interpret the earlier edict as applying only to reclaimed land, which would have brought other land acquired before 1215 into tithe payment, but this failed (Knowles 1963: 356). The edict refers only to the Cistercian order by name, but it is extended in a closing clause, to 'other regulars who enjoy like privileges' (ibid.). This meant that the Carthusians and Military Orders were exempt on similar terms to the Cistercians, whilst the canons and black monks were exempt on newly cleared land only (Constable 1964).

However, the edict ended with a tone more favourable to the monastic houses. The tithes on newly acquired land must be paid 'unless they think fit to compound with those churches' (Rothwell 1975: 667). This phrase may be the key to the pattern of monastic tithe payment we see in the historical record and implies a flexibility in situations where the monastic house was in a position to appropriate or make an arrangement with the parish church, and thus to waive tithe payment to themselves, rendering the land tithe free to all intents and purposes. A series of further edicts, both papal and royal, retracted and extended the conditions outlined by the Council for different orders and individual houses (Grove 1896, Williams 1984: 241), and thus 1215 cannot be regarded as a fixed cut off point.

By the thirteenth century then, tithes had become an item of monastic property similar to any other, and legal wrangles over ownership and exemption continued until the Suppression. Continued attempts to appropriate churches from which tithes were a primary revenue, as well as recorded tithe income, suggest that tithes represented a desirable and profitable revenue for the religious houses. The creation of vicarages often meant that the tithes became split between the vicar and the monastery as the rector, and the direct flow of tithes for the benefit of the parish

church became a somewhat blurred concept. The leasing of benefices and tithe collection often meant that the monastery was merely enjoying a pension from the church, and again reduced tithe payment to a financial transaction and commodity.

Conclusions: monastic tithe payment and ownership

Although the picture of tithe payment and exemption throughout the Middle Ages which emerges is a complicated one, several conclusions can be drawn which are directly applicable to the monastic landscape of the West Country. In terms of tithe ownership, any monastery might own appropriated churches or tithes, but the reformed orders were less likely to, because of their constitutional approach to the issue. Conversely, the older Benedictine and Augustinian houses were more likely to own them, having no self-imposed limits on acquiring tithes and were more likely to have tithe free demesne through merger of title or custom than the new orders.

Similarly, any house might enjoy some degree of formal freedom from tithes, not purely the Cistercian or other new orders. The biggest distinction encountered is between demesne and tenanted land. Tenanted land was expected to pay some tithes no matter who was landlord, and full tithe exemption applied only to demesne in direct cultivation or newly cleared land (*novalia*). On land acquired before 1215, the new orders were more likely to enjoy formal tithe free status on their demesne than older orders, although this cannot be regarded as a hard and fast rule. Although the older monasteries do not occur in Papal decrees granting exemption as much as the new orders, individual houses might enjoy some exemption and often tithe payment on their demesnes had lapsed through long custom. Any house might enjoy tithe free status on newly *cleared* land acquired before 1215, but only the new orders- particularly the Cistercians, Carthusians and Military orders after this date.

The Lateran Council of 1215 is commonly assumed to provide the date at which the acquisition of tithe free land ceased, and thus is the picture of monastic demesnes provided by the tithe data. However, what emerges most strongly from the historical record is that formal exemption from tithe payment, such as Papal grants to the reformed orders, was only one factor in the overall picture. The ownership of tithes and appropriation of parish churches and the subsequent merging of land and tithe

ownership on monastic demesnes was as important in creating effectively tithe free land. The role of local custom and individual cases must be considered to complicate the picture of monastic tithe exemption before 1215 and also after it.

6.4.3 Post-Suppression history of tithes

At the Suppression, tithes held by monasteries passed to the Crown with the rest of their possessions, and were at Henry VIII's disposal. They subsequently became the property of the great landowners and courtiers who were the beneficiaries of much of the monastic property. As Savine points out, the transfer of tithes from religious to lay hands was probably not as drastic a change in ownership as one might expect, given that many had been farmed out to lay owners by the religious houses for many years prior to the Suppression (1909: 110). These tithes were thus fully secularized, and were treated as a revenue yielding estate by their new owners, just as they had been by the monasteries, and could be sold, exchanged and disputed just as any other property would be (Hill 1959). The Suppression also made provision for the transfer of tithe exemption on monastic estates to their new owners as well (Platt 1969: 57).

By the nineteenth century, the payment of tithes had become one factor in growing dissatisfaction with the position of the Church of England, and something of an anachronism following an era of rapid agrarian innovation, and the system was unable to adjust to new agricultural practices, crops and changing values (Evans 1976). The process of enclosure in particular had demonstrated the extent of the problem and the possibility of radical changes to tithe payment. Indeed, it has been estimated that 60-70% of enclosure agreements were responsible for commuting some tithes. Following much debate and several failed attempts at reform, the 1836 Act was passed that commuted all surviving tithes to fixed rent-charges, which were standardized according to national corn prices.

For the majority of tithe districts, this process resulted in a tithe award or agreement, where the consent of all relevant parties to the commutation was agreed or enforced, followed by a map and apportionment, which outlined the distribution of commuted payments in detail for the district. In these cases, it is possible to reconstruct details

of tithe-exemption, previous monastic ownership and other relevant information from the award and apportionment. However, there are a number of districts or parts of districts for which no apportionment exists, and this can be due to several reasons. In some cases, the tithes had been extinguished by previous Enclosure Acts, although this was most prevalent in the north and west. In many cases, the merging of the tithes, that is that the landowner and tithe owner were one and the same, meant that the tithes could be extinguished without need for a costly map and apportionment, and this was facilitated by a supplementary Act of 1838 (Grove 1896).

6.4.4 Using the nineteenth century tithe literature

For this thesis, the County Record Office copies (parish or diocesan copies) of each tithe map and apportionment have been used, and are referenced accordingly in the bibliography. For each parish studied, the map and accompanying award and apportionment have been consulted, and details about tithe free land, monastic or relevant post-dissolution ownership and other items of toponymic or topographic interest noted. The data from the tithe maps has been mapped onto the modern OS 1:25 000 series throughout, which was found to be the best compromise between the need for high resolution of detail and convenience of size. There was a high correlation at this scale between modern and nineteenth century field boundaries for the majority of the parishes studied, modern urban settlements being the key exception.

Wherever possible, the tithe map results have been viewed in parallel with information from the VCH parish accounts of estate descent, as well as medieval legislative and cartulary sources. The more extensive VCH coverage for Wiltshire than Somerset means that the information concerning tithes in the post-Suppression period for this county is considerably more full. Similarly, the existence of a Wiltshire Record Society Volume on the tithe surveys (Sandell 1975) provides far more detailed abstracts and discussion about the tithe commutation process in the county than is available for Somerset. The two atlases by Kain & Oliver (1995, 1986) provide abstracts of every tithe survey as well as valuable discussion of the

compilation and coverage of the survey nationally[17]. Special note is perhaps worth making of Grove's (1896) account of tithes and their alienation from the secular clergy in the medieval and early modern period. Published under the auspices of the Tithe Redemption Trust with the intention of righting this grievous wrong; his account is a pioneering, if flawed and rather biased, attempt to record monastic and lay appropriation, impropriation and exemption from tithe payment. He also provides a list of statutes relating to monastic exemption and surveys, taken from the tithe files, of tithes that had been extinguished by commutation, merger or enclosure since 1750.

Somerset and Wiltshire both have very high coverage of tithe surveys, as do the South Western counties generally. This largely due to the absence of wide-scale Enclosure, which had already commuted many tithes in the heavily enclosed North and West[18]. Commutation awards exist for 295 out of 336 (88%) tithe districts[19] for Wiltshire and 476 out of 501 (95%) for Somerset (Kain & Kain 1995). Those which are missing are generally parishes where tithes had already been merged with land ownership or commuted in some other way, or were tithe-free already. For the same reasons, only very small parts of some parishes appear on the tithe maps, such as Norton St Philip in Somerset or Bremhill in Wiltshire. All the parishes in the two counties which contained major monastic houses have existing tithe surveys, with three notable exceptions[20]. They have all been studied, as have a selection of parishes containing known monastic estates.

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[17] The database which was created by this project is lodged with the ESRC Data Archive, University of Essex, and can be consulted with consent of the author. It provides easily accessible statistics for each tithe district and provides a useful indexing tool.

[18] Courtney (1980) noted the difficulty of using the tithe maps for a study of monastic estates because of widespread enclosure.

[19] The tithe districts were established as a preliminary to commutation. In Somerset and Wiltshire, they were largely co-terminous with parish boundaries, although tithings were sometimes treated separately, as were some extra-parochial and other areas.

[20] Witham, Ansty, Easton Royal (Bristol was not included)

It has not been possible to examine anything approaching the total tithe coverage for the two counties, nor to treat each example with the detailed analysis it deserves. However, the sample used demonstrates clearly the potential of the source, and the survey of a wide spectrum of parishes provides points for discussion that hopefully illustrate what greater use it could be put to and the issues involved in so doing.

7. THE DISTRIBUTION OF MONASTIC ESTATES

7.1 Introduction

Each monastery was built upon and sustained by the gifts of founders, patrons and benefactors throughout its life. These gifts were of many types, from entire manorial estates and parochial churches, to monetary payments and exemptions from dues and levies. Spiritual income was any revenue derived from the Church, and consisted primarily of the ownership of, or interest in, parish churches. Appropriation of a parish church placed the monastery in sole control of its assets, and so they fought hard to establish and retain the ownership of rectories. In addition, fixed pensions and tithes could bring in considerable revenue with or without the existence of a rectory. Indeed, tithes were one of the greatest sources of spiritual revenue, as was glebe land, the accumulation of which could be sufficient to establish a rectorial manor. However, the temporal income was usually the bulk of any monastic endowment. It was derived primarily from landed estates, manorial profits and agricultural revenue, but could also include a broad range of urban property, profits from commerce, monetary payments and income from industry.

In this chapter, it is the broad pattern of monastic houses and their estates across the region that is investigated. The houses present in the sources are discussed, and their overall fiscal valuations considered. The significance of spiritual and temporal income is noted, followed by an analysis of the geographical distribution of the spiritual and temporal estates belonging to each house. Mapping the spiritual and temporal estates at different dates clearly indicates the relative wealth and significance of different houses within the local economy, and the varying landholdings patterns represented by the monastic endowment of the region.

7.2 Assessed monastic houses and their valuations

7.2.1 Domesday 1086

There were seven West Country monastic houses listed as landowners in Domesday book- Bath, Glastonbury, Athelney and Muchelney in Somerset, and Malmesbury, Amesbury and Wilton in Wiltshire (Table 6, Appendix 1) (Figure 7.1). Glastonbury was the wealthiest monastic house in the country at this date, and was worth approximately £800. In contrast, the two next wealthiest houses, Malmesbury and Wilton, were worth approximately one quarter of this, indicating the huge division of wealth between Glastonbury and the other West Country houses, even by this date. In national terms, Wilton and Malmesbury can be considered middle-sized houses in the survey, similar in value to houses such as St Albans (Hertfordshire), Shaftesbury (Dorset) or Peterborough (Cambridgeshire). Malmesbury is often referred to as the richest house in Wiltshire in the survey (Darlington 1955: 87), but examination of the data indicates that whilst it held the greatest number of hides, they were low in value in comparison to other houses locally, and Wilton Abbey was much wealthier in fiscal terms. Finally, the valuation of the remaining four houses can only be considered small in national terms.

A further seventeen[1] houses owned property in Somerset or Wiltshire, of which more than half were French (Table 7, Appendix 1). Although numerous, these French houses owned just one or two manors or churches each and represented very little of the monastic wealth in the region; less than 3% (assessed in hides). Indeed Darlington considered for Wiltshire that the alien houses 'had not secured many gifts in this county' (1955: 79). However, the pattern in Hampshire, usually considered as a county with a high proportion of alien houses (Cox 1903: 105), reflected closely that found in the West Country, with a spread of small manors and royal churches donated by the king and tenants-in-chief. A clear pattern of patronage can be seen, with new landowners donating English manors to monastic houses in their gift. St Stephen, Caen (Calvados) was William the Conqueror's own foundation, and

[1] One further house, Cerne Abbey (Dorset), is listed in the survey as owning property in the region before 1066.

benefited from his generosity in the region, whilst he was also responsible for the endowment of several churches upon other alien houses. The abbey of St Mary, Grestain (Eure) gained property from his brother Robert, Count of Mortain, whose father Herlewin was its founder in 1040. Queen Matilda, wife of William, had granted one manor to the abbey of Bec (Eure), at Brixton Deverill. The abbey was later a major landowner throughout the country through its house at Ogbourne St George in Wiltshire, but at this date, it retained just one manor there, Ogbourne being a later acquisition (Morgan 1946). The importance of royal patronage can thus be identified at Domesday as strongly as for the preceding Saxon period, despite the shift in emphasis to a new pattern of endowment.

The other eight English houses that owned property in Somerset and Wiltshire were primarily located in the adjacent counties of Dorset and Hampshire (Figure 7.1). The geography of the pre-Conquest West Saxon kingdom is reflected in the distribution of houses and their estates to a large extent. The tenth-century royal foundations of Dorset and Hampshire had a strong influence in the West Country, particularly in Wiltshire, with more houses owning more hides of land the further eastwards one moved across the region. The properties belonging to the establishments of Winchester and the two nunneries at Romsey and Shaftesbury in particular were valuable estates that formed a substantial proportion of their overall wealth at this date and continued to do until the Suppression. The only exception to this pattern was the distant Westminster Abbey, which held the patronage of Cricklade church in Wiltshire. Westminster was a late royal foundation or refoundation in the eleventh century and its overall endowment was a widely scattered collection of estates and properties gathered together by its patron, Edward the Confessor (Harvey 1977).

In conclusion, the pattern of Benedictine houses in the region was well established by Domesday. The wealth of the Somerset and Wiltshire monasteries relative to each other was already apparent, although the small size of Muchelney and Bath in particular is noticeable. The most striking feature of the establishments in the survey is their number, particularly the large quantity of French houses that had gained estates in the region in the preceding twenty years.

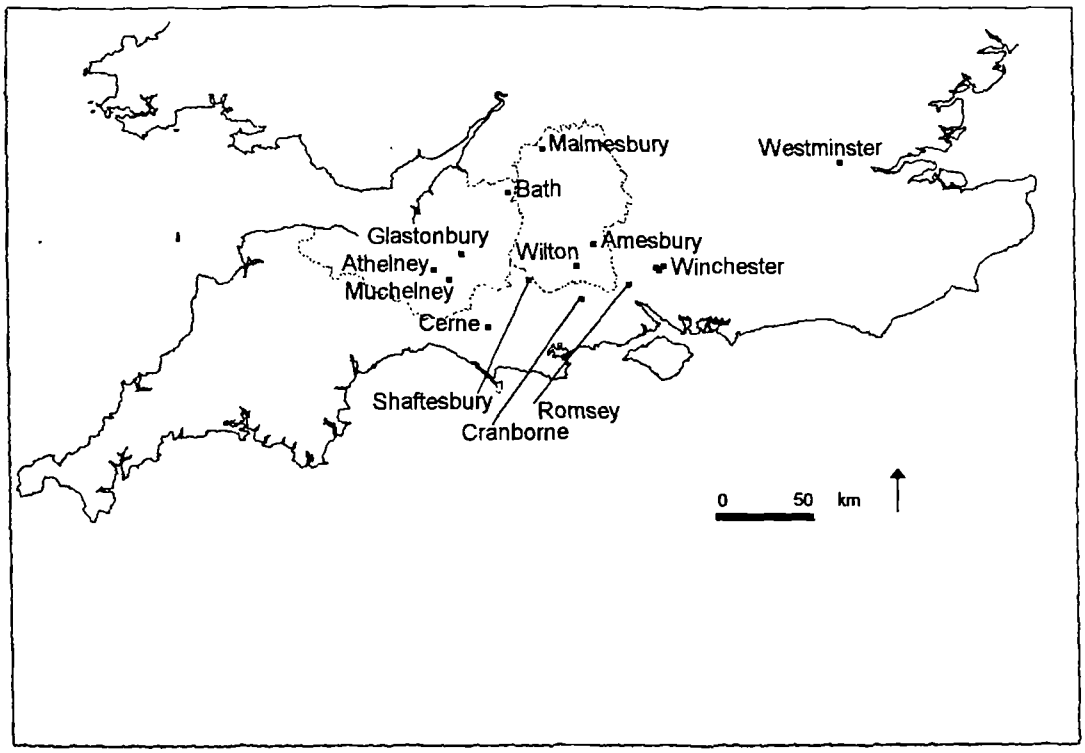

Figure 7.1 Distribution of houses with property in Somerset and Wiltshire in 1086

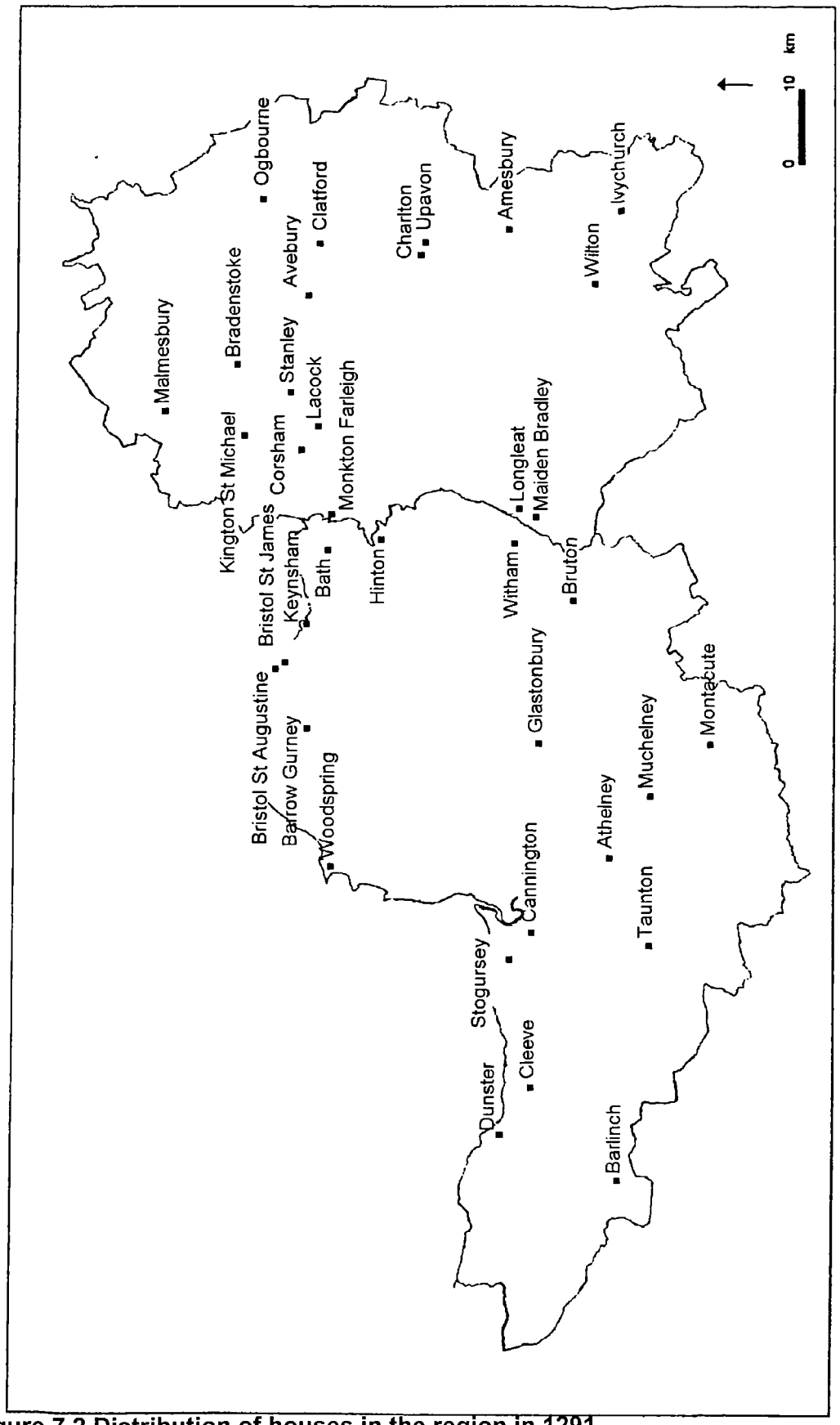

Figure 7.2 Distribution of houses in the region in 1291

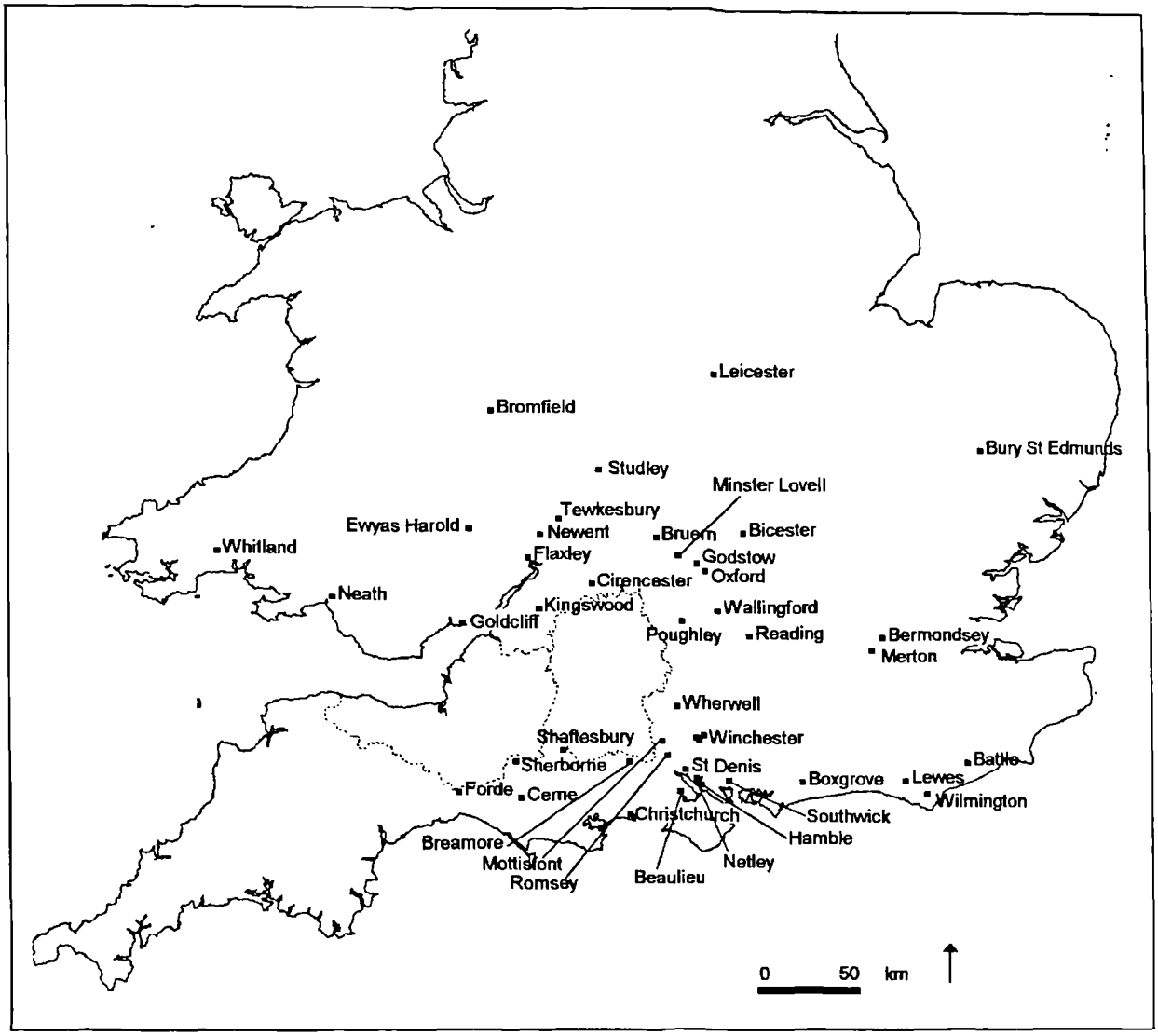

Figure 7.3 Distribution of houses with property in Somerset and Wiltshire in 1291

7.2.2 The Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV 1291

West Country monasteries in the source

There were twenty-nine West Country monasteries and seven alien cells surveyed in the *Taxatio* (Figure 7.2). This represents the vast majority of monastic houses known to be in existence in the region at this date, and suggests that the valuation was reasonably comprehensive in its knowledge and examination of monastic houses. Certain types of establishments were exempt from the tenth and thus do not appear in the survey. The Templar and Hospitaller Orders were exempt entirely (Larking 1856) and thus Buckland Priory and Temple Combe Preceptory, as well as the small houses at Ansty and Rockley do not appear. Hospitals and mendicants were similarly exempt (Graham 1929), and the absence of Trinitarian houses from the survey is probably because of this. Poor nunneries or other religious communities which could not adequately support themselves were also excluded (ibid.), and this almost certainly explains the absence of St Mary Magdalen's Bristol and the small dependent cell at Burtle. The Gilbertines had enjoyed exemption from taxation at various dates but were included in 1291 (Davnall et al 1992) and houses of the order do appear in the *Taxatio* nationally, so the absence of Marlborough must be considered an omission, unless it escaped survey on account of poverty. Similarly, the absence of Stavordale Priory must be considered an error unless it was also considered too poor to be taxed.

Valuation of the West Country monasteries

The overall valuations of the monasteries in the West Country were generally very low in 1291 (Table 8, Appendix 1). The houses can be classed in three groups. Thirteen houses had valuations greater than £60 (Figure 7.4) and they form the large houses in the survey. Glastonbury, Wilton and Malmesbury Abbeys were consistently valued at a high level throughout the Middle Ages and the *Taxatio* survey reflects the wide and ancient extent of their estates and interests. Although Amesbury was also a pre-Conquest foundation, its valuation at Domesday was small compared to the other monasteries in the survey, and its large valuation can instead

be credited to the royal generosity it experienced at its refoundation as a Fontevraultine house in the twelfth century. The alien house at Ogbourne, acting for the French abbey of Bec, had the second highest valuation in the survey after Glastonbury, and was one of houses with the most numerous properties as well. Both factors were undoubtedly a product of its peculiar position within the family of establishments dependent on Bec Abbey. Ogbourne administered all of the English possessions of the abbey not attached to other cells and priories (Morgan 1946), and thus its revenue was derived from a wide variety of locations across the country.

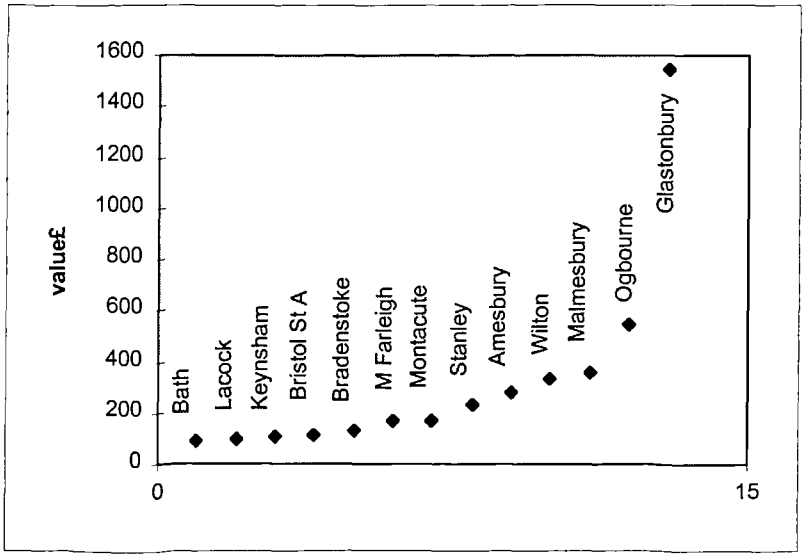

Figure 7.4 Valuation of monasteries worth over £60 in 1291

The two Cluniac priories were both valued between £100 and £200, as was the Cistercian house at Stanley. The larger Augustinian houses form the lower end of this group, with Keynsham, Bristol and Bradenstoke valued at over £100 and Lacock just below. The valuation of Bath Priory places it in this group: it is low compared to later assessments, but does reflect the comparatively low value of its estates at Domesday, and suggests that its 1535 valuation may represent a genuine increase in its assessment.

The sixteen houses valued between £10 and £100 (Figure 7.5) form the middle-sized group of houses in the survey. Although the fiscal valuations for the houses in this category are very low, the relative size of one house to another overall is similar to that found in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*. The new order houses of Witham, Hinton and

Cleeve for example, are of similar, middle-rank size in this survey, as they are in 1535. The key exceptions are the two large Augustinian houses, Taunton Priory and Bruton Abbey, whose valuations appear too low in relation to the other houses, particularly for the latter, which was valued at a similar level to Keynsham and Bath Abbeys in 1535. The two Benedictine houses at Muchelney and Athelney also appear to have small valuations. However, similarly to Bath Priory, neither house was assessed very highly at Domesday, and it may be that the considerable difference in valuation between 1291 and 1535 represents a true reflection of the development of their assets. It must be noted that Muchelney Abbey has no spiritual revenue listed in the survey, although it was in possession of the rectory of Chipstable and tithes from Somerton amongst other spiritual items (Bates 1899: 28), and thus its valuation is incomplete.

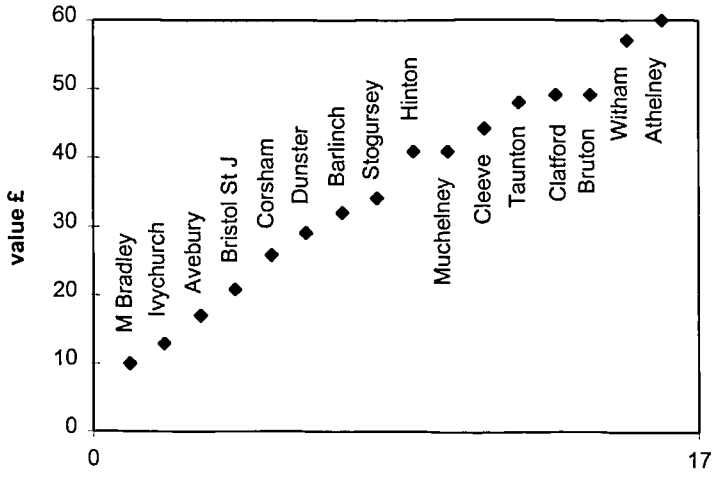

Figure 7.5 Valuation of monasteries worth between £10-£60 in 1291

The six smallest houses in the survey were all valued at below £10 (Figure 7.6). The three nunneries were all valued at a low sum in 1535 as well, as was Woodspring Priory. Longleat was suppressed on account of its poverty in the fifteenth century, and Upavon was an alien priory with few possessions, and thus they are all houses for which a small valuation is expected at this date. However, it is the tiny figures arrived at -less than £1 for Cannington and Barrow Gurney Priories- that make the

valuation seem unreliable. It seems likely that these figures represent only partial valuations for the three nunneries, which may have been intended to be omitted on account of poverty (see Chapter 6). Neither Woodspring nor Longleat have any spiritual revenue recorded in the survey: this appears a genuine reflection of the priory's affairs in the latter case, but Woodspring is known to have had interests in two churches at this date which are not recorded (Scott Holmes 1911: 144).

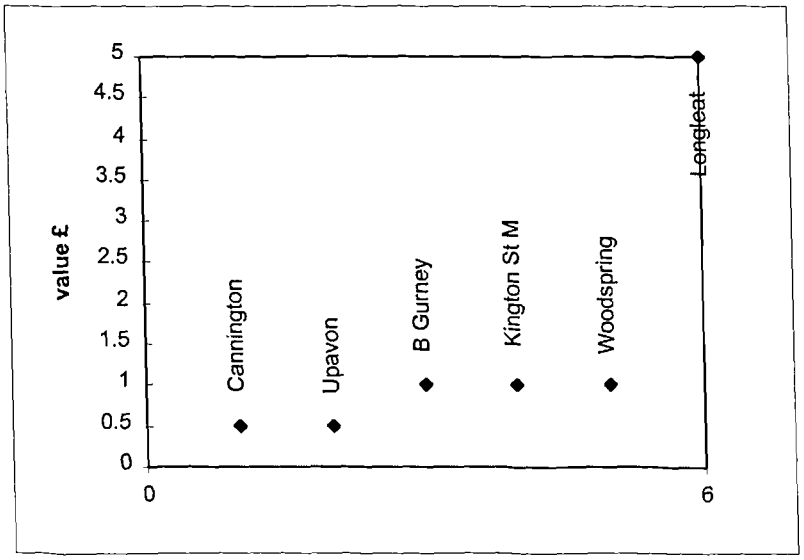

Figure 7.6 Valuation of monasteries worth less than £10 in 1291

Comparison of the 1291 and 1535 valuations for the twenty-six monasteries that appear in both sources (Table 14, Appendix 1) suggests that although the magnitude of the actual fiscal figures are very different, which may be a result of the nature of the *Taxatio* assessment (Chapter 6), the overall assessment of one house relative to another is very similar. Figure 7.7 illustrates this graphically by comparing the ranked data for the pairs of valuations[2], and a proportional relationship is evident. The houses that stand out as seeming very under or over valued in 1291 are the exception rather than the rule. Those that appear to be valued at a low rate relative to their situation in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* are those already mentioned, Muchelney [19], Bruton [20] and Bath [24], as well as the nunnery at Cannington [4]. Those

[2] Each house that appears in both surveys has been ranked twice, one for each date, and the resulting data plotted. This allows general trends in the data to be identified whilst reducing the impact of the huge range of actual fiscal figures.

whose position in 1291 implies greater relative wealth than their assessment in 1535 does were primarily Lacock [9], Monkton Farleigh [10], Stanley [11] and Bradenstoke [13].

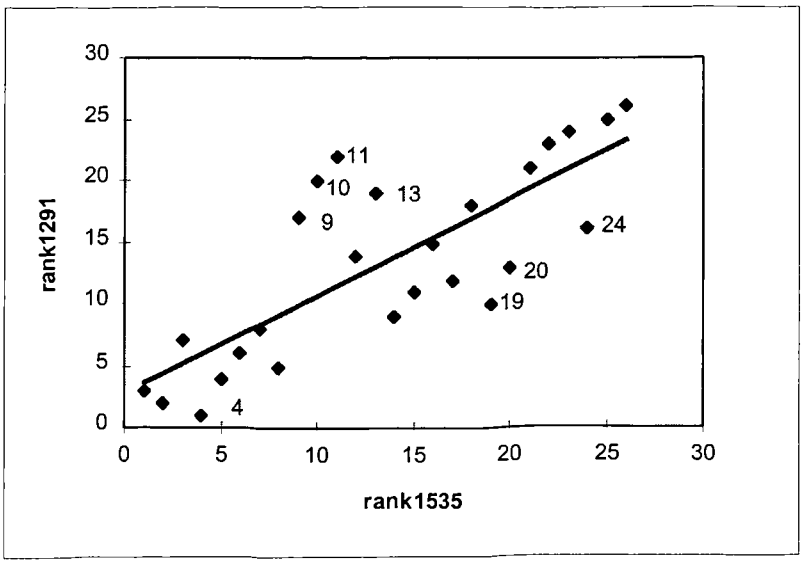

Figure 7.7 Comparison of 1535 and 1291 valuations using ranked data

Monasteries outside the region

The *Taxatio* provides an immediate indication of the large amount of spiritual and temporal property owned in the West Country by French and English monasteries located outside the region themselves. Over sixty other institutions are listed (Table 9, Appendix 1), compared to just eighteen in 1086. Five of these were French houses- *Lyra*, *Fuger*, Grestain (Eure), Tiron (Eure et Loir) and L'Isle Dieu (Eure) which are recorded as holding property directly in the region, rather than through an English alien cell. For example, the property at Charlton is listed as a direct temporal possession of the Premonstratensian house at L'Isle Dieu, rather than as a monastic cell and property owner in its own right, like the alien cells at Ogbourne or Avebury.

The rest of the institutions that owned land in the West Country represent a wide range of the English and Welsh monasteries (Figure 7.3). The majority were located in the neighbouring counties to Somerset and Wiltshire, particularly Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Dorset, but houses as far away as Leicester, Bury St Edmunds

(Suffolk) and Battle (Sussex) also owned property in the region. All of the large Benedictine houses of Hampshire and Dorset which featured in the Wiltshire and Somerset Domesday survey are still to be found as landlords in 1291, and held the greatest amount of revenue from the region of any 'outside' houses (Figure 7.8), reflecting again the geography of the Wessex kingdom. The establishments of Winchester retained substantial properties in particular[3]. Similarly, the Domesday estates of Cranborne Abbey can be identified within the property of Tewkesbury, where the community had moved in 1102 (Knowles & Hadcock 1971: 63).

The remainder of the houses represent a wide selection of foundations, from small alien priories such as Hamble (Hampshire) and Goldcliff (Glamorgan), to the Cluniac motherhouse at Lewes (Sussex) and several large Cistercian abbeys, such as Flaxley (Gloucestershire), Forde (Devon) and Bruern (Oxfordshire).

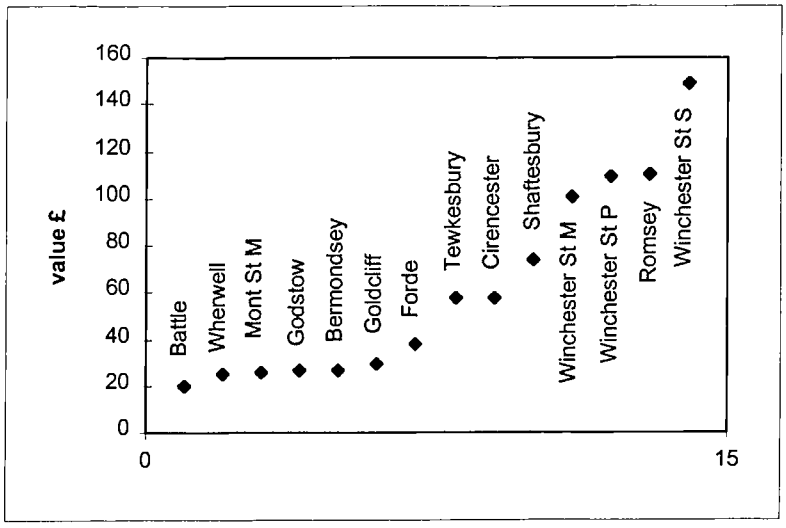

Figure 7.8 Houses outside the region with property in it worth more than £20 in 1291

In some cases, the monastery owned one valuable estate or group of estates: the manor and church at Bromham in Wiltshire was worth £20 to the distant Battle Abbey, and Godstow derived £27 from two adjoining properties in north east

[3] St Peter's Abbey, or the New Minster, had been refounded at a new site at Hyde Abbey in 1109, whilst the property of St Swithun's Priory was more clearly distinguished from that of the bishop than in 1086. However, the continuity of estates is clear despite these changes.

Wiltshire. However, in many instances the house derived a very small amount of revenue from few properties. St Denis (Southampton), for example, owned property amounting to £19 in Wiltshire, but it was scattered widely across the county. The pension in Winterbourne Bassett church was worth just £1 10s to Lewes Priory (Sussex), and in an even more extreme case, the abbey of Tiron (Eure et Loir derived just 6s 8d from the church of Stratton St Margaret. The benefit of these possessions to their owners in practical terms must be questioned. Although very numerous, the sixty houses outside the region only held property worth just over £1100- approximately one quarter of the total monastic revenue of the West Country at this date.

7.2.3 The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* in 1535

West Country monasteries in the source

There were thirty-one houses in the region which appear in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* as full monastic establishments (Figure 7.9). A further three dependent houses which were in existence at the time were also recorded. Bristol St James was listed as a dependency of Tewkesbury and its prior rendered an account as one of the officials of the abbey. Burtle Priory had a short entry but appears as little more than a single manor with a prior and bailiff. The property of Stavordale can be identified within the entry for Taunton Priory. The possessions of the suppressed house at Longleat, granted to Hinton in 1529 can be identified likewise. Similarly, many individual estates of the suppressed alien priories were also granted to other religious houses. For example, Ivychurch received the properties of Upavon and Charlton from Henry VI (Brakspear 1934: 435), and these appear in the survey of the priory.

Two houses that are known to have been in existence in 1535 were not recorded in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* for the region. The greatest omission is St Augustine's Abbey, Bristol, which was one of the major landowners in the region, and would have been one of the wealthiest houses locally in the survey if included. St Mary Magdalen's in the city was also omitted, although it was visited by the Suppression commissioners in 1536 (Graham 1907: 93). Indeed, the religious houses of Bristol

were poorly represented in the survey, because St James was not surveyed in its own right either, being a dependency of Tewkesbury, and it may be that the peculiar position of Bristol as a separate county within the Diocese of Worcester led to some degree of oversight (Bettey 1989: 24).

The partial presence of the Military (Hospitaller) houses in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* may be explained by their status by this date. The two largest Hospitaller houses, Buckland and Temple Combe, appear, although neither as Military establishments. By 1535, the preceptory at Buckland was probably operating as a standard Augustinian nunnery (Burrow 1985), whilst the possessions listed for Temple Combe are valued as properties of the free chapel annexed to the Commandery, rather than the establishment itself. After the Suppression of the Templars, Rockley was donated to the Hospitaller order and ceased to be a preceptory; it later became a manor attached to the head house of the order at Clerkenwell (London) and was valued as such in 1535. The Hospitaller house at Ansty likewise became a property administered by another preceptory at Trebeigh (Cornwall) and was valued as such in 1535.

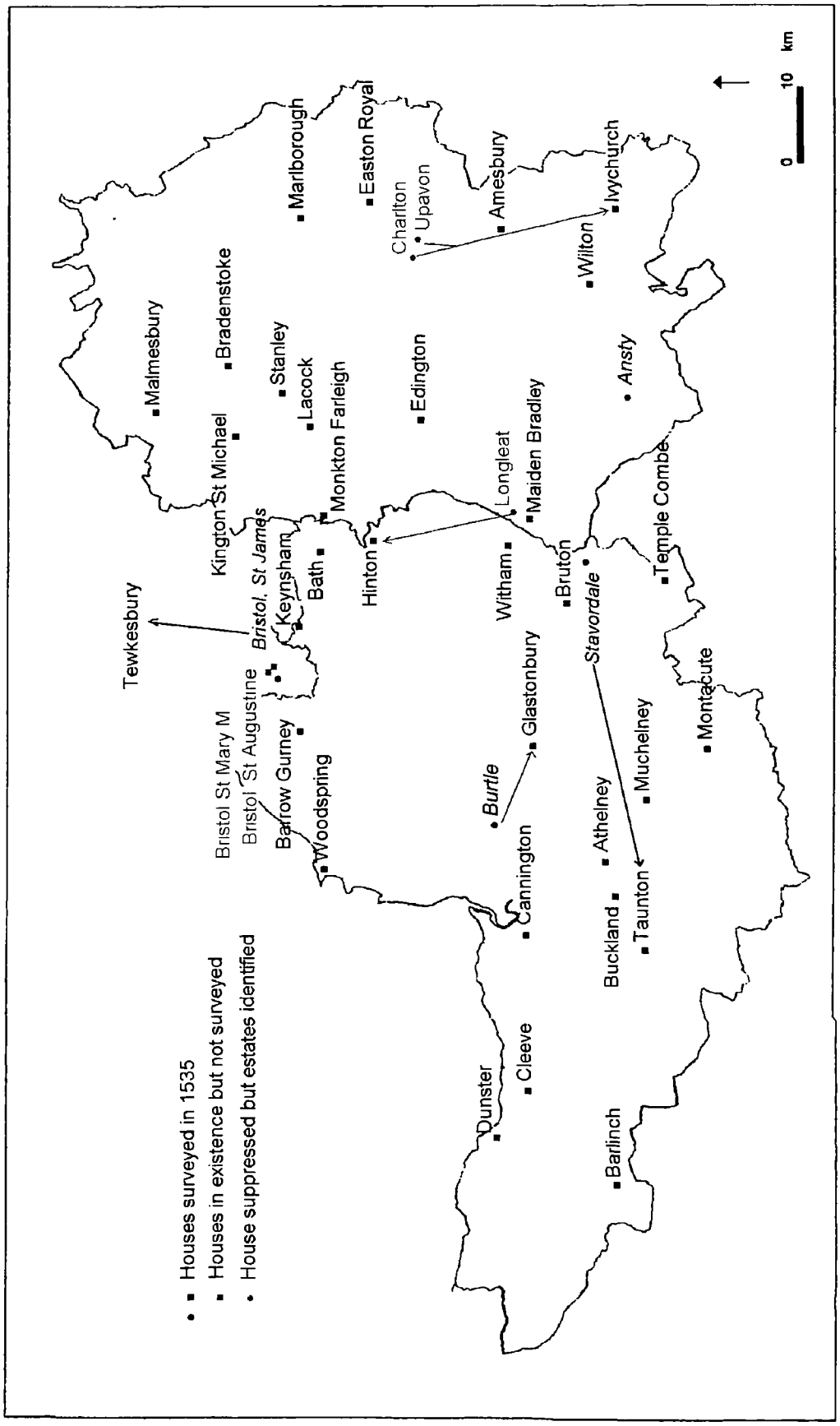

Figure 7.9 Distribution of houses in the region in 1535

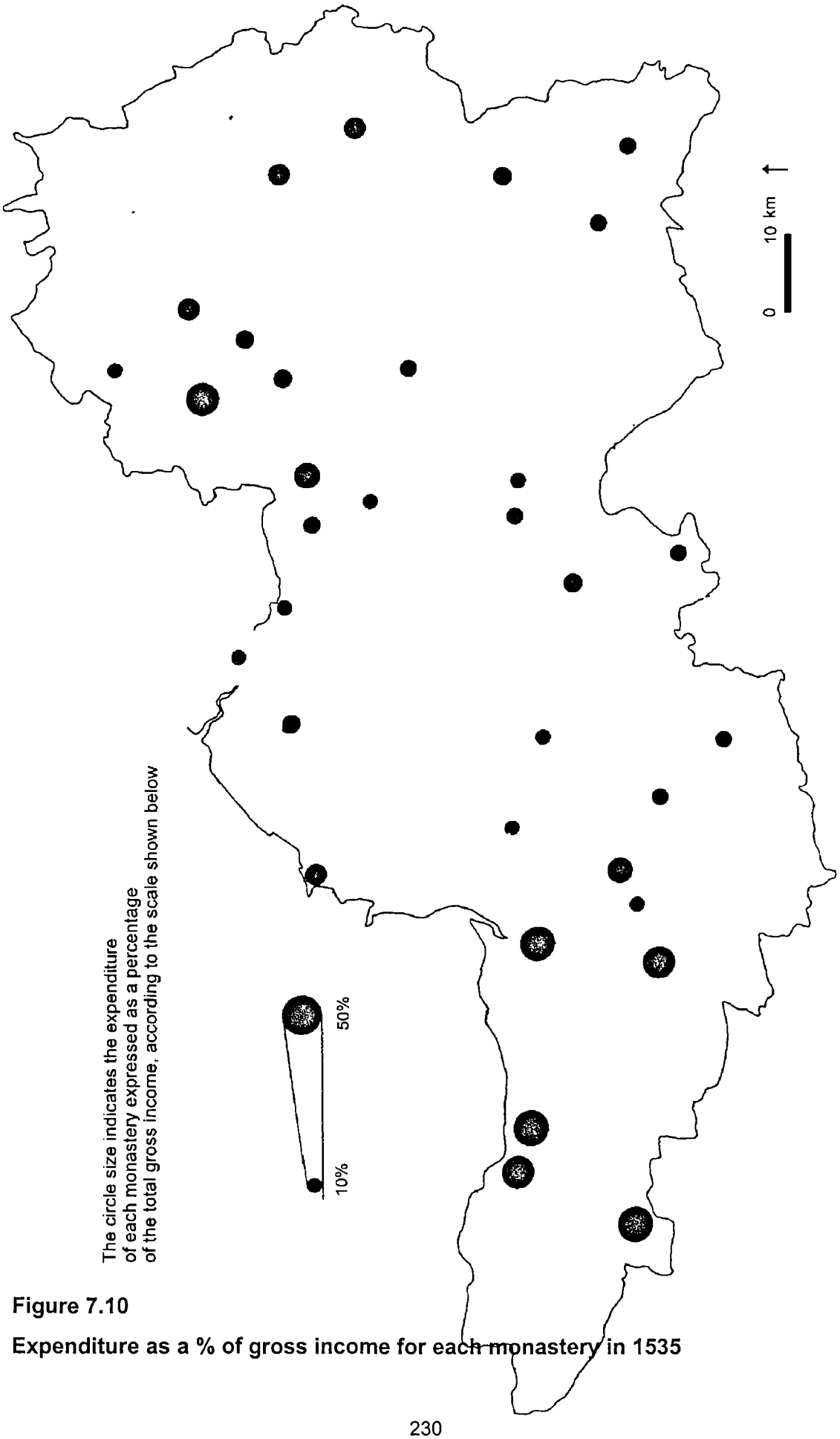

Figure 7.10

Expenditure as a % of gross income for each monastery in 1535

Gross and net totals

Gross and net totals have been calculated for the thirty-one houses fully recorded in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* and St James and Burtle Priory (Table 11, Appendix 1)[4], and two Suppression valuations for St Augustine's and St Mary Magdalen's in Bristol have been included where relevant[5]. The printed edition of the document provides the net total at the end of each monastic entry from which the tenth was calculated, and this is the figure most often quoted as an index of the wealth of an individual house (e.g. Knowles & Hadcock 1971; VCH volumes). Depending on the format of the entry, some houses also have a 'gross' value supplied. However, these cannot be used as real gross totals, because in many cases they are in fact a preliminary net total, where the outlay specific to a particular property has been deducted, and the resulting net totals for each property totalled prior to the deduction of general expenditure.

However, use of a computerized database to process the data contained in the document allows calculation of real gross and net values for each property, house and the whole region. Savine also attempted this, and found a considerable number of discrepancies in the published figures, some attributable to errors in addition, others less explicable (1909: 93). He was cautious about presenting himself as infallible in the computation of such large groups of figures, and the present author is similarly hesitant. However, the use of computerized calculation does reduce the scope for computational errors considerably, and thus the discrepancies between the calculated and published totals are provided for discussion.

In nine cases, the final net totals calculated disagree with the corresponding totals published in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*[6] (Table 10, Appendix 1). Two of these can be demonstrated to stem from incorrect subtotalling within the document (Bruton and Glastonbury); for the others, it can only be assumed that they are the result of overall

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[4] The possessions of suppressed and dependent houses are considered in later sections but have not been included in this general discussion: Burtle and St James' Priory have because their accounts stand as independent valuations.

[5] Sabin (1960) provides several valuations for St Augustine's in the later Middle Ages. Graham (1907) provides the Suppression commissioners' valuation of St Mary Magdalen's.

[6] All totals are considered correct to the nearest shilling. Discrepancies in pence value are due to the effect of half and quarter pennies, not included in my calculations.

errors in addition[7]. The difference is negligible- less than £3- for all of the houses except Muchelney, for which the published value is £10 or 2% higher than its actual assessment.

Many of the entries in the printed version indicate by italics items of expenditure provided by the commissioners that were disallowed in the final assessment. Thus two sets of net figures exist for seven houses in the region. Because the disallowed figures often provide extra detail about the monastic economy, particularly employed officials, they have been included in this study, and are also listed in Table 10 (Appendix 1). The discrepancy between the two valuations is considerable in the case of Edington and particularly Lacock, and suggests to what degree the net value of the monasteries, and in many ways our perception of their wealth, is dependent on the arbitrary limits on deductible expenditure imposed by the survey commission. However, the fact that only seven houses have these disallowances included also suggests that these limits were adhered to in a fairly rigorous fashion.

The range in net values of the West Country monasteries was large, from £23 for Barrow Gurney Priory (St Mary Magdalen in Bristol was valued at even less -£21- by the Suppression commissioners (Graham 1907: 93)[8]) to over £3300 for Glastonbury, the wealthiest monastery in the country at this date. Figure 7.11 illustrates the range of assessed values (although Glastonbury is omitted for ease of presentation). The crucial assessed value ultimately was the £200 figure used in the first Act for the Suppression of the Smaller Monasteries and half of the houses fell below this (Figure 7.11). However, the general spread of the fiscal values suggests this figure was somewhat arbitrary and does not suggest that the assessment was influenced by it: the valuations do not cluster below the £200 mark. Instead, the clearest division in wealth occurs around the £350 mark, dividing the few wealthiest monasteries from the majority.

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[7] i.e. addition of the same data using a spreadsheet produces a different total to the published one.

[8] The £6 income of Burtle Priory was considerably less, but was clearly not supporting conventual monastic life by this date.

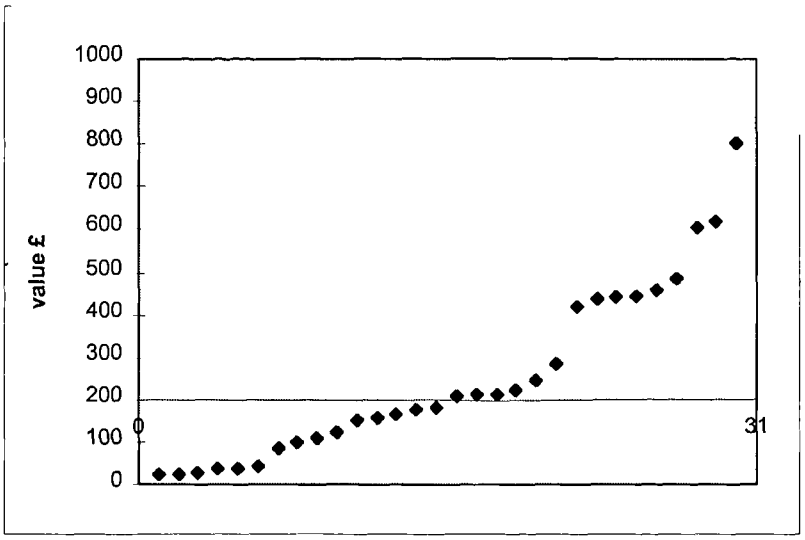

Figure 7.11 Net fiscal valuations in 1535 (excluding Glastonbury)

The monasteries might be considered in four arbitrary categories: 'small', valued at less than £100, 'middle-sized' (£100- £300) (Figure 7.12), 'large' (£400- £500), and the four 'very large' Benedictine foundations, Bath, Wilton, Malmesbury and Glastonbury, all worth more than £600 (Figure 7.13). All of the pre-Conquest foundations, with the exception of Athelney, were valued highly in the survey, the remainder forming part of the large-sized group. The Augustinian foundations with possible pre-Conquest roots were also among the monasteries with greatest assessment, particularly Keynsham and Bruton. The Suppression assessment of St Augustine's in Bristol would have placed it in the 'very large' category.

The largest group numerically was that of the middle-sized monasteries, and it consisted mainly of the new order houses and the medium-sized Augustinian establishments. The consistency in valuation of the new order houses as a group is striking, with only Amesbury being valued at a considerably greater sum. In contrast, the small houses were primarily represented by the post-Conquest Benedictine foundations as well as the 'unusual' orders of canons- the Gilbertines and Trinitarians. The valuations of both St James' and St Mary Magdalen's Priories would place them in this group, and thus the small fiscal worth of the post-Conquest black monks and nuns is very evident.

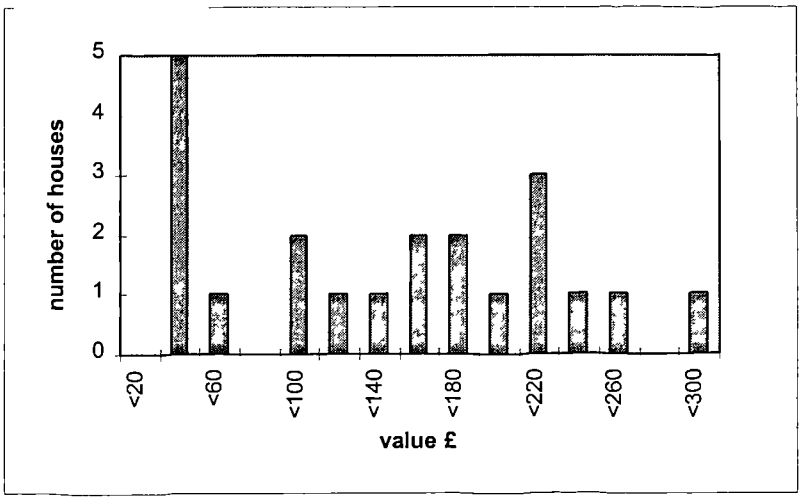

Figure 7.12 Valuation of houses worth less than £300 in 1535

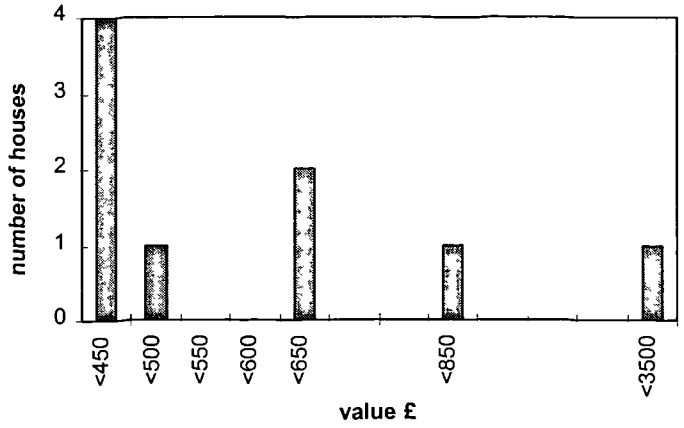

Figure 7.13 Valuation of houses worth more than £400 in 1535

As discussed above, the gross value for each monastic house can be calculated from the individual items within the survey. The picture presented by the figures is broadly similar to that created by the net valuations, and the relative wealth of the monasteries follows a similar trend in both cases. In particular, the relative wealth of the largest and smallest houses does not alter when considering the gross rather than net values. However, the increase in value for many of the individual monasteries is strikingly high, and alters the overall picture presented by the source considerably. Calculating the ratio of net to gross assessments for each of the monasteries demonstrates the variation in assessment.

Savine used the aggregate gross and net totals for the whole country to estimate the net income of the monasteries at 84-5% of their gross income nationally (1909: 98). Doing the same for the region gives a figure of just over 84% (calculating the figure for each county separately gives 85% for Somerset and 83% for Wiltshire), indicating that the West Country reflects Savine's national percentage closely.

However, these figures do not provide the average percentage value for the relationship for any individual monastery[9]. This is provided by calculating the average value of the individual percentages for each monastery, which Savine did not attempt. For the region, the average value for each monastery can be calculated at just under 79% (Figure 7.14). Although the majority of the houses fall into a group where the relationship between net and gross income falls between 75% and 90%, the overall variation across the houses is remarkable, the relationship ranging from 94% (Buckland) to just 55% for Cleeve. It is the houses with a very low net to gross ratio that are most striking. The net totals for Cleeve, Cannington and Barlinch were all less than 60% of the gross value, a drastic reduction.

As well as the increase in assessment between the net and gross values being striking for individual houses, the overall effect of the range of relationships on our perception of monastic wealth in the region is considerable. For many of the houses, particularly the smallest and largest houses, the relative wealth of individual houses to the group is unaffected by considering the gross values. Thus, the very high ratio between the two assessments for Glastonbury has little impact on its relative wealth because of its great size initially, and Cannington, despite the dramatic increase in net to gross value, remains one of the smallest houses in the region. However, some cases present a very different picture. The net valuations for Cleeve and Buckland for example, £155 and £223 respectively, suggest that the Cistercian house was the much smaller of the two economically. However, their widely differing expenditure

[9] Throughout his study, Savine provides ratios and percentages between sets of variables, such as gross and net income, by comparing the aggregate totals for groups of monasteries. This results in a relationship that is valid for the group, but does *not* provide the average value of the relationship between the variables at the level of the individual monastery. This is calculated by taking the average value of the individual ratios for each monastery in the group. The average value for any individual monastery cannot be compared to the regional total, because they represent different relationships. Therefore, unless an aggregate total is required for comparison with Savine's work, and a figure is indicated as such, all figures are averages calculated from statistics for individual monasteries.

means that the two gross values, £278 and £237, reverse the situation and indicate that they were in fact of similar size in terms of their assets.

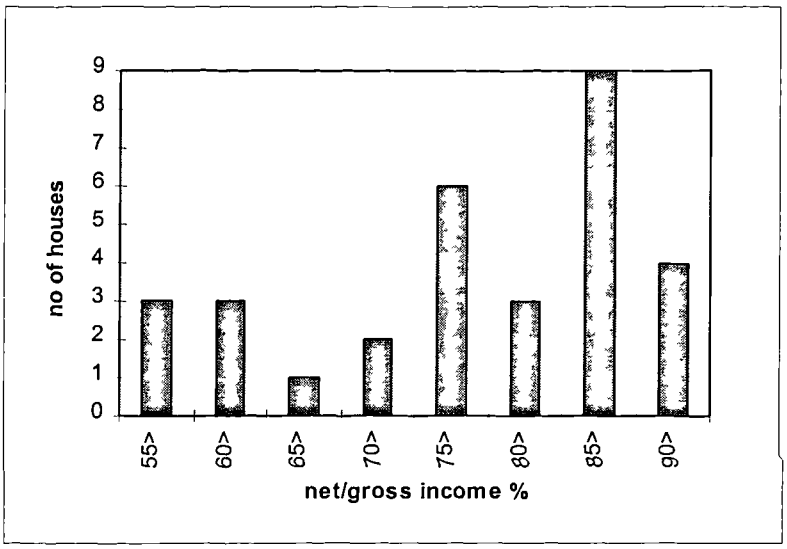

Figure 7.14 Net income as % of gross income 1535

The key issue is determining whether the relationship between net and gross values in the survey is a genuine reflection of the monastic economy, and thus whether the net totals are a valid measure of the wealth of individual houses, or whether they represent vagaries in the recording of expenditure, and that in fact the gross values provide a more accurate assessment. If the net values were reliable, they would suggest a monastic economy of widely varying character across the houses.

The houses with the highest expenditure in proportion to their income lay primarily in Western Somerset (Figure 7.10). This may reflect a genuine geographical factor within the monastic economy, but is more likely to be a result of the recording strategy of the commissioners. Four of these monasteries lay on one commissioners' circuit- Athelney, Barlinch, Cleeve and Dunster- and Cannington and Taunton may have done as well. Only Buckland provides an exception to this geographical trend, having the highest net to gross ratio recorded. Bettey (1989: 28) has remarked upon the under-valuation of Cleeve Abbey. This data suggests that the religious houses of Western Somerset generally had a lower net to gross value ratio than other

establishments in the region, whether by virtue of heavier outlay or more conscientious recording of it.

The expenditure of each house was made up of a variety of elements. Each house paid a series of officials (see Chapter 8), and on average spent between 3-7% of their gross income on this. The two Wiltshire houses with the greatest outlay were both nunneries- Lacock and Kington St Michael- and this reflects their heavy expenditure on lay officials to administer their property. The remainder of the outlay was made up of customary payments, often to other local landowners and administrators, for land held in various manors, as well as alms to the poor and ecclesiastical payments, due from interests in churches, support of chapels and clergy, and often payments to other monastic houses.

The high outlay of the houses in western Somerset was mainly due to heavy payments and dues on secular properties. The manor and rectory of Mariansleigh [? Devon] for example, belonging to Barlinch Priory, was valued at over £16 gross, but rendered only one quarter of that net, primarily because of capital rent payments. Similarly, the manor of Treborough was worth £2 to Cleeve Abbey because of manorial dues, although its gross value was over £6.

7.3 The temporalities

7.3.1 Temporal property in 1086

Domesday Book provides the first wide-ranging survey of land-holding in England in the Middle Ages. It is a far more enigmatic and complex source than its layout might suggest, and a huge body of literature exists concerning the survey, its reliability, interpretation and completeness. However, whatever its drawbacks and omissions, it provides an unrivalled opportunity to examine the distribution of monastic estates. What usefulness it lacks in detail and clarity concerning individual holdings, it gains in its provision of comparative data at a broad scale. Knowledge about monastic estates before the Conquest varies from house to house, as does the attention each

has received. Thus for some monastic estates, the inadequacies of the Domesday survey are easily recognized[10], whilst for others, it provides the first overall inventory of their property. It is with these reservations and the weight and extent of previous scholarship in mind that the following basic issues concerning the pattern of monastic estates in the region in 1086 are offered.

Figure 7.15 and Figure 7.16 are composite maps which outline the extent of monastic possessions in 1086. They have been compiled using a variety of sources to provide historical detail about the presumed extent of individual estates[11], and the results have been compiled onto a map of modern civil parishes, amended where possible to known pre-1840 or earlier boundaries. Where the monastic estate is known or presumed to have formed the majority or entirety of a parish or manor, it has been included as such, where it is less certain, a spot value has been provided instead. It is thus not suggested that the boundaries shown are 'real' Domesday boundaries, nor do they represent exclusively monastic land, but are partly schematic. It is however considered that the overall distribution and extent of the areas in the figures provides a convincing assessment of the size and influence of the monastic estates outlined in the survey.

The most striking point about the distribution shown is the huge extent of monastic estates in the region in 1086. The dominance of the estates of Glastonbury Abbey in Somerset is commonly acknowledged and they occupied a large proportion of the centre and east of the county. However, in Wiltshire, where no single house dominated, the overall quantity of monastic property was equally substantial, particularly in the north west and southern extremities of the county.

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[10] See Abrams (1996: 266) on Glastonbury for the most detailed discussion for any monastic house in the region of pre-Conquest charters and the evidence of Domesday Book in comparison.

[11] Primarily the notes provided in the Phillimore edition of the survey (Thorn & Thorn 1979, 1980), Alecto edition maps (1989), hundredal, parochial, Domesday and monastic accounts in the relevant VCH volumes and individual studies on Saxon charters and Domesday boundaries where applicable.

Key for figures 7.16 and 7.17

	SOMERSET	WILTSHIRE
■	Glastonbury	
	Shaftesbury	
■	Winchester (male)	
■	Alien houses	
■	Bath	Romsey
■	Athelney	Malmesbury
■	Muchelney	Amesbury
	Cerne	Cranborne
■		Wilton
		Winchester (female)

Density of colour indicates status, thus for Glastonbury:

■ held directly

partially or wholly sub-infeudated

held before 1066 or thought to be part of 1086 estates previously

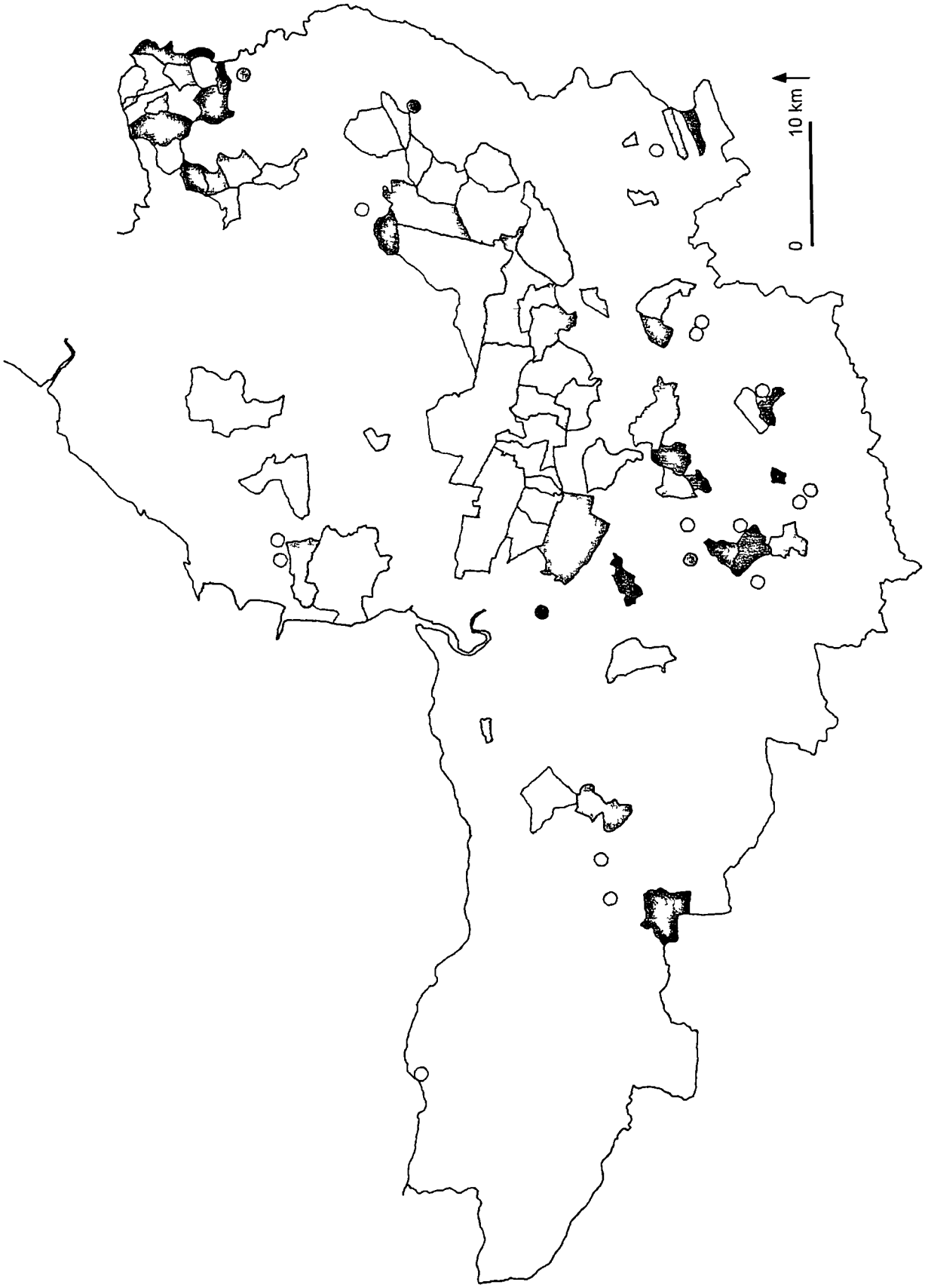

Figure 7.15 Monastic estates in 1086 Somerset

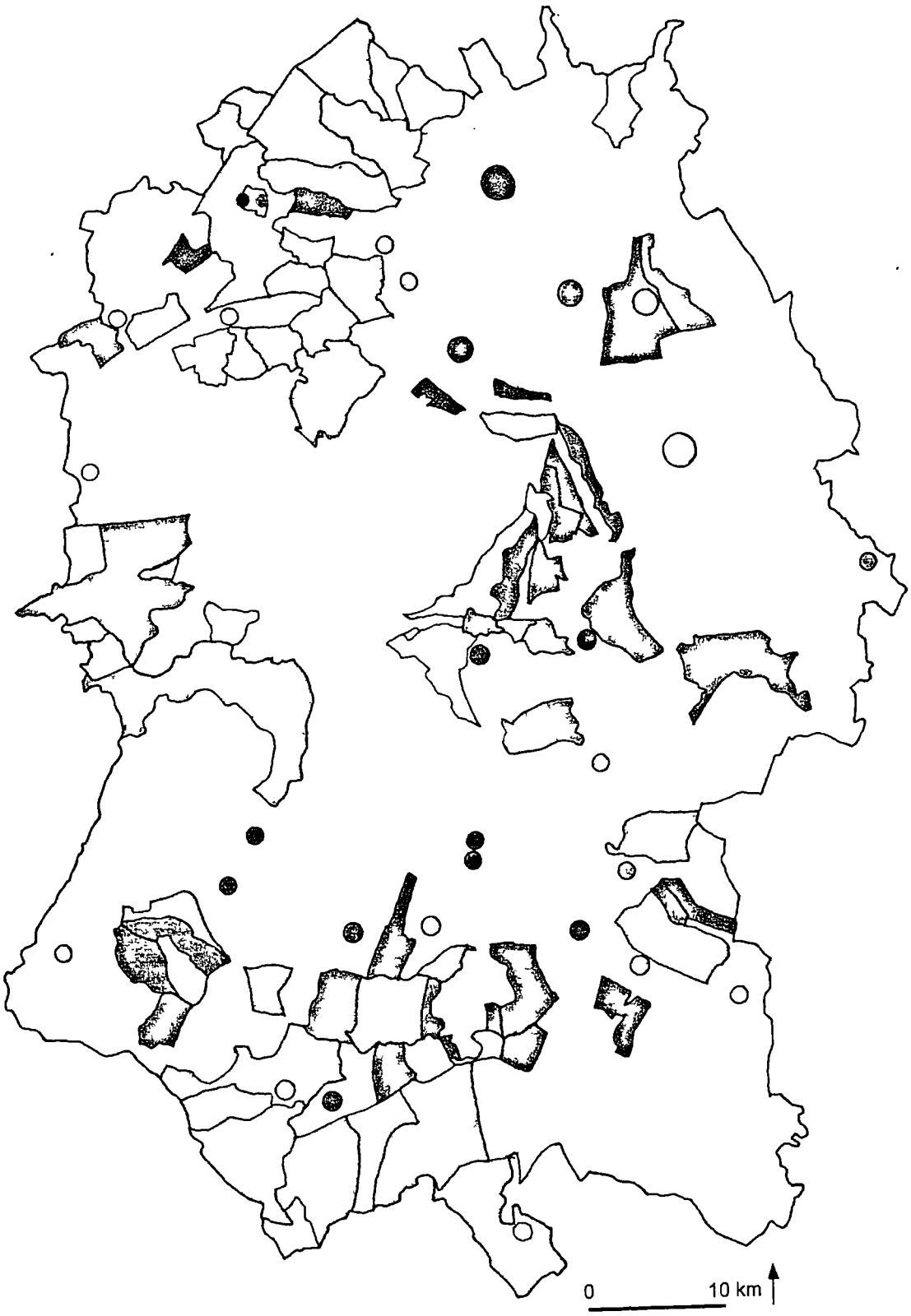

Figure 7.16 Monastic estates in 1086 Wiltshire

The estates were not distributed evenly across the two counties and a diminishing amount of monastic property can be seen as one moves westwards, despite the scale of the Glastonbury estates. A distinct pattern of compact blocks of monastic land is observable from the map, particularly in Wiltshire. The estates of Malmesbury surrounded the monastery itself, and the house was the dominant landowner in the north west corner of the county. In the south, the adjacent estates of the two nunneries at Wilton and Shaftesbury occupied most of the land south of the River Wylye. Shaftesbury Abbey's demesne estate at Bradford on Avon and the nearby Romsey Abbey manors of Aston and Edington form two large but discrete properties in west Wiltshire. The most scattered area of estates was on the uplands of central eastern Wiltshire, where the monastic establishments of Winchester held several valuable manors, interspersed with the northern-most properties of Wilton Abbey. However, even here, the overall distribution suggests one area of monastic dominance.

In Somerset, the pattern is different and the estates of Glastonbury represent the vast majority of monastic land in the county. The manors of Bath Abbey formed a compact group in the north east of the county, but apart from this, there were very few other monastic estates. Athelney and Muchelney owned several scattered properties across the south of the Somerset Levels and the Old Minster at Winchester held Lydeard St Laurence near Taunton[12], but generally there were very few monastic estates across the south and west of the county.

The monastic houses of Somerset and Wiltshire also held estates across several other counties. Glastonbury owned property in 5 other counties, primarily Dorset, but also manors in Berkshire, Devon, Gloucestershire and Hampshire. The estates of Amesbury Priory were split between Wiltshire and the neighbouring county of Berkshire, where it held substantial properties in the hundred of Kintbury Eagle. The holdings of the other houses outside the region were much more modest in extent: Wilton held two manors in Dorset, Malmesbury a valuable manor at Littleton-upon-

[12] The full holdings of the bishops of Winchester in the Taunton area were extensive, and their inclusion would alter the picture considerably. A division has been made in this study between properties later belonging to the monastic community at Winchester and the see, the former being included and the latter not. Following the same convention, the holdings of the bishops of Salisbury and Bath and Wells have not been included, neither supporting a regular monastic community.

Severn in Gloucestershire and property in Warwickshire, and Athelney the manor of Purse Caundle in Dorset [Do 15,1], which it had exchanged with the Count of Mortain. Bath Priory also held several properties in Gloucestershire.

The loss of estates at the Conquest

The overall extent of monastic estates in 1086 was less than in the period preceding the Conquest, many of the houses in the region having suffered losses to secular and episcopal lords in the intervening years. Tenanted land was most likely to be lost (Abrams 1996: 289). The five hide estate of Cerne Abbey at Cheriton had been bought from the abbey by Alfwold for his lifetime only [So 28,2][13]; it should therefore have returned to the church but had not. Several exchanges of land are recorded: The Count of Mortain exchanged land for Tintinhull held by Glastonbury [So 8,31], and 'Bishopstone' held by Athelney [So 19, 86]- both of which were necessary to his development of Montacute. Glastonbury had lost an unnamed five hide estate because the tenant of the land had exchanged it for the manor of Limington [So 8,41]. However, in general, little explanation for the transfer of property is provided.

The houses which held land in Somerset appear to have suffered more heavily than those in Wiltshire. Nearly one hundred hides[14] of Somerset land were recorded as rightfully monastic but held by secular lords, four times as many as for Wiltshire. The Count of Mortain and bishop of Coutances were the chief offenders. The Count was responsible for approximately half of the lost monastic lands in Somerset, with Athelney, the Old Minster (Winchester) and Glastonbury all suffering losses on his account. The Old Minster had lost a ten hide manor at Crowcombe to the Count [So 19,7], a substantial part of which was untaxed inland, and Athelney had lost two hides in the manor of Ilton [So 10,1]. However, the greatest losses were incurred by Glastonbury, no doubt because it had most to lose. As well as the seven hides at Tintinhull, the Count of Mortain also held lands in four other locations which were rightfully Glastonbury's, as well as the patronage of St Andrew's church at Ilchester.

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[13] References in square brackets indicate a section in the relevant volume of the Phillimore edition of the survey; county abbreviations as in Appendix 3.

[14] The seventy-four hide total for lost Glastonbury Abbey land is taken from Abrams' (1996: 317) interpretation of the figures given in the survey.

All of the property held by the bishop of Coutances which had previously belonged to a monastic house had been held by Glastonbury Abbey. Abrams (1996: 289) has estimated that in total, 14% of Glastonbury Abbey's fiscal value immediately before 1066 was lost by 1086, which indicates that the impact of monastic lands in the region had been greater even than the picture presented in 1086.

The monastic endowment

The distribution of monastic estates observed in 1086 was the result of several hundred years of patronage and endowment, whose character varied considerably in composition across the houses. The smallest houses, Muchelney, Athelney and Amesbury, held a scatter of individual properties which were dominated by one or two manors, larger than the rest, that formed their primary revenue. Long Sutton and Ilton were granted to Athelney at its foundation (Bates 1899: 118) and formed the core of its estates until the Suppression. They were valued at ten and eight hides respectively, the rest at less than five. Similarly, Muchelney Abbey's primary estates dated to grants of the eighth century (ibid.): ten hides at West Camel, and twenty hides each at Drayton and Ilminster, as well as land on the island itself, and they likewise remained the core until the Suppression. Amesbury Priory's great wealth and widely distributed landholdings at the Suppression stemmed from its refoundation in the twelfth century, but the pattern of its few estates in 1086 set the geographical framework for these later endowments, which built upon its two key areas of estates, around Amesbury itself and twenty-one hides in the Berkshire hundred of Kintbury Eagle. The exception to this pattern in 1086 was six hides in Winterbourne Bassett [Wi 16,6], which can be identified with Rabson Manor in the parish.

Although not as valuable, the estates of Bath Priory show a compact and discrete arrangement characteristic of those of the larger houses in the region. The majority lay within the royal hundred of Bath in adjoining manors to the borough itself. They totalled eighty and one half hides in extent and probably represent the initial seventh-century grant of one hundred *mansae* by the founder Osric (Hunt 1893: i, 7).

Although the estates of Malmesbury Abbey, were considerably more extensive- it held the largest number of hides of any monastic house in Wiltshire in 1086, assessed at 282- they too formed a discrete set of estates. They lay entirely within the north-west corner of Wiltshire between the Fosse Way and the Roman road from Bath to Marlborough. One estate, Brokenborough, dominated these possessions and has similarly dominated study of the early history of the abbey. At Domesday it was assessed at fifty hides, considerably more than the later manor of the same name could have encompassed and probably including many other later abbey manors not individually named in the survey[15]. It has been proposed that, like Bath, it represented the remains of a one hundred hide grant, of a tenth rather than seventh-century date. The remainder of the abbey estates were also made up of large properties, many rated at over twenty hides or more, reflecting the accumulation of valuable possessions across the rich land of the Avon Valley and Cotswold Hills. The list of estates in 1086 mirrors strongly that of the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* in 1535.

The third largest house in the survey locally was Wilton Abbey, whose estates lay primarily in southern Wiltshire, with three discrete manors further north. The largest property by a considerable margin was the seventy-seven hide estate of Chalke [Wi 13,9]. This probably represented the remains of a one hundred hide royal estate granted to the abbey in 955, and closely corresponded to later hundred of Chalke (Stowford), which belonged to the nunnery until the Dissolution. Apart from this estate, the nunnery's possessions were smaller on average than Malmesbury's, the larger properties averaging ten hides in extent, and a high number of small (less than five hide) properties. The overall distribution suggests, although the properties occupy one area, they were built up of much smaller units and represent a far less consolidated endowment overall compared to the large male houses in the survey.

The numerous and extensive estates of Glastonbury Abbey formed one primary block of land across the Somerset Levels and south eastern slopes of the Mendip Hills. In addition, the abbey held three large estates in north Somerset, at Brent on the shores of the Severn Estuary, Wrington and Winscombe, and another at West Monkton near Taunton. The Wiltshire properties of the abbey were distributed in large manors that corresponded with the later hundreds of North and South

[15] See Chapter 2 for references concerning the study of this great estate.

Damerham. The majority were assessed at over ten hides, the greatest being at Damerham itself, assessed at fifty-two hides [Wi 7,1].

Of the establishments outside the region, the greatest properties were held by the institutions of Winchester. Those of St Mary's Abbey (The Nunnaminster, Winchester) were very small, but the male establishments drew a considerable amount of their overall income from properties in Wiltshire (Drew 1947: 21). The bishops of Winchester did possess the large and valuable manor of Taunton in Somerset with many appurtenances [So 2,1], but only Lydeard St Lawrence [So 2,9] was recorded for the possession the monks of the cathedral priory rather than the see in general. In Wiltshire, the property later held by the monks of the Old and New Minster (Winchester) were located in east Wiltshire, much of it later grouped into the hundred of Elstub and Everleigh (Stevenson 1980: 105). These were large and valuable manors distributed on the uplands of the Marlborough Downs, the most valuable being at Collinbourne Kingston, assessed at fifty hides [Wi 10,2]. The two nunneries of Shaftesbury and Romsey also drew a substantial proportion of their overall income from properties in Wiltshire. Romsey held the two adjoining manors of Ashton and Edington [Wi 15,1;2], providing one discrete unit of seventy hides that represented over half its total revenue in 1086. Shaftesbury held the nearby manor of Bradford-on-Avon, granted to it in the late Saxon period with Tisbury, another of its Domesday estates [Wi 12,2;4]. Tisbury fell in the group of south Wiltshire estates that lay near the monastery itself.

Finally, the small properties in Wiltshire belonging to Cranborne Abbey are interesting because they reflect its relationship with Tewkesbury, an ailing seventh-century foundation which had been granted to the abbey in 980. In 1086, Cranborne held two estates in the county, twenty hides at Ashton Keynes on the northern boundary of the county [Wi 11,1] near Tewkesbury and one hide at Damerham in the south [Wi 11,2][16] near the monastery itself. Tewkesbury became the motherhouse in 1002, and the Ashton Keynes estate remained in its possession until the Suppression.

[16] Now in Gloucestershire and Hampshire respectively.

Land-holding and composition of estates

Monastic estates in the survey were either partially sub-infeudated i.e. one or more tenanted properties existed within the estate, held directly in demesne in their entirety, or completely sub-infeudated. The exact proportion of each varied from house to house, but the most common pattern was for the majority to be partially tenanted, with a smaller number of entirely demesne estates and very few totally sub-infeudated. Bath Abbey was the only house for which all of its estates in the region were either entirely demesne land or totally sub-infeudated, the majority being retained directly. Similarly, Wilton Abbey retained a very high proportion of demesne estates, with the tenanted parts of other sub-infeudated estates representing a small proportion of the whole as well. Indeed, the existence of directly farmed land on monastic estates was relatively high in 1086. Demesne manors were not numerous (except for the two houses outlined above) and few approached the size of Shaftesbury Abbey's property at Bradford on Avon which, including the attached estate of Kelston, totalled forty-nine hides. However, the incidence of completely sub-infeudated estates was small, and although the majority of estates contained some tenanted land, this often represented a small proportion of the whole, leaving substantial demesne lands.

At Glastonbury, Muchelney and Athelney, the existence of demesne estates surrounding the monastery coincided with the existence of land that was declared never to have paid tax[17]. Athelney held one untaxed hide at Lyng [So 10,5], and similarly Muchelney held four untaxed carucates on the three islands of Muchelney, Middleney and Thorney [So 9,1]. As well as twelve hides on Glastonbury island itself, the abbey held two untaxed hides on the island of *Andersey* [Nyland], which was tenanted [So 8,1]. The appearance of this geld-exempt land in the survey may represent the late manifestation of areas of 'inland', the core section of major royal and ecclesiastical holdings that was structured differently to the wider estate (Faith 1997: 16). A proportion of the land at Glastonbury Abbey's major estates across the Somerset Levels was also untaxed and it also held untaxed land at Sturminster Newton and Buckland Newton in Dorset [Do 8,1; 8,3], although none of this was

[17] The Glastonbury estate was not entirely demesne, Godwin holding *Andersey* from the abbot [So 8,1]. The entry is divided into different components however, and the others can be regarded as held directly.

retained entirely in demesne. The demesne land at Kilmington held by Shaftesbury Abbey was taxed for only one of its five hides [So 37,7][18] and the two hides Wilton held at Amesbury was untaxed, *because it was part of the exempt royal manor which* had been granted to the nunnery whilst King Edward was ill [Wi 1,3].

Land held by monasteries as tenants was restricted to the alien houses and nunneries only. In Somerset, only one manor[19] was held by Montebourg Abbey as a tenant-in-chief, and in Wiltshire, two manors by Bec and Lisieux Abbeys. The other five manors endowed upon alien houses were held from secular lords. This perhaps reflects the status of alien monasteries as relative newcomers into the structure of the region, and their reliance on the patronage of the new Norman land-holding families.

The nunneries of Wilton, Shaftesbury and Winchester St Mary each held some manors in the survey as tenants, and this appears to be part of a slightly different approach to the endowment of land upon women and female communities than that of men. The manors all formed 'dowry-style' gifts that were granted to accompany the entry of an individual nun into the community. St Mary's, Winchester (Nunnaminster) held two hides in Kennett from Hugh Donkey 'for his daughter', who was presumably a nun there [Wi 50,5], and this is laid out more specifically in the case of Kilmington. Here, Serlo of Burcy 'gave it [Kilmington] to St Edward's Abbey [Shaftesbury] with his daughter' [So 37,7 note], and Shaftesbury held the manor from him accordingly. Wilton Abbey was listed as holding two hides in Wiltshire (unidentified) before 1066, which 'Thored had given to it with his two daughters; from them they were always clothed until the bishop of Bayeux wrongfully took them away' [Wi 13,21]. Similarly, William Shield, a tenant of Romsey Abbey at both Ashton and Edington in 1086, later restored his holdings in the manors to the house when his two daughters became nuns there [Wi 15,2], thus providing another powerful illustration of familial generosity for the benefit of the female religious community.

Each case reinforces the direct relationship between gift and community membership: this is not something which can be traced in a similar way for the male

[18] Now in Wiltshire.
[19] The ownership of churches and their accompanying endowment is considered in section 7.4 below.

houses at Domesday and suggests a different system of patronage for nunneries[20]. It is reminiscent of the concept of endowment being directly related to individual clerics before the tenth-century monastic reformation, espoused by some authors (Costen 1992: 26, see also Rahtz 1993: 47). The appearance of these estates in Domesday may suggest that a closer tie between community membership and endowment was preserved at female houses at a much later date than their male counterparts.

In Somerset, there are two cases recorded where individual nuns held lands themselves, without the involvement of a formal institution. Edith, a nun, held 'twelve acres of land in alms from the King' [So 16,12] at an unspecified location, whilst a further two nuns held two and a half virgates from the King at *Holnicote* [So 16,13]. There are no male religious holding land on the same independent terms in the region, although Alnoth the monk held one hide from Glastonbury Abbey in 1086 [So 8,20], and a further monk held properties from the abbey before 1066 [So 8,26;35]. Gilchrist (1994: 34) noted female cases in the survey for nine counties, and considered them as possible evidence for informal communities of women within the landscape, separate to the large aristocratic land-owning foundations such as Wilton and Amesbury. She drew similar conclusions about the existence of possible female religious place names, such as Nunney in Somerset (ibid.). Again it suggests that the endowment of individual nuns with 'dowry' property was a familiar feature of monastic patronage in the eleventh century.

7.3.2 Distribution of temporal property in 1291

498 entries of monastic temporal property from the *Taxatio* have been catalogued in this study[21], of which 376 lay within Somerset, Wiltshire and Bristol in its widest sense, the rest in other counties. The structure of the survey for the region means that these entries provide simply the name and valuation for each property, as well

[20] Although note that Malmesbury Abbey's Warwickshire property had been donated by a monk on his entry into the house [Wa B2].
[21] This corresponds to considerably more individual locations, as many entries contain multiple place names. They have been considered by entry rather than individual locations to preserve information about the grouping of monastic estates, and because this is how they were valued.

as its monastic owner[22]. The majority of these properties were recorded at a very low value (Figure 7.17). 78% were worth less than £10, another 17% between £10 and £30, and only the remaining 5% were worth more. However, the properties of greatest value were assessed very highly, the largest being Glastonbury Abbey's estate on the Polden Hills [Middlezoy], worth £180.

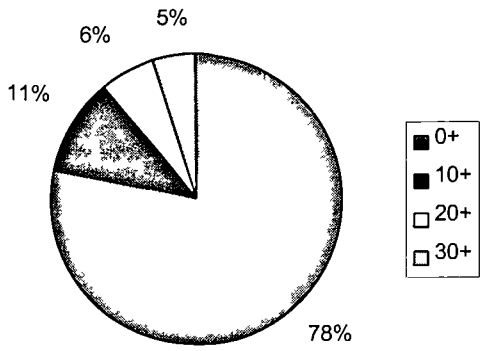

Figure 7.17 Value of individual temporal properties in 1291 (£)

The properties in the *Taxatio* have been mapped in two parts. Figure 7.18 and Figure 7.19 show those worth less than £10 in 1291 and Figure 7.20 and Figure 7.21 those worth more than £10. The overall distribution of monastic temporal properties recorded in the source was fairly even across the two counties, with only two areas showing a conspicuous absence. The northern Somerset Levels contained several large monastic estates, most notably Glastonbury Abbey's estates at Wrington and Brent, and St Augustine's Abbey's manor at Portbury, as well as the small Augustinian house of Woodspring. However, they were largely devoid of monastic estates in the survey, and this appears a genuine reflection of monastic influence there throughout the Middle Ages. South east Wiltshire also appears as something of a lacuna in the recording of temporalities in 1291, but this is due to omissions in the source. This area was dominated by the estates of Wilton and Shaftesbury Abbeys throughout the Middle Ages. However, the temporal estates of Shaftesbury Abbey in

[22] The only exception to this is the nine entries containing the phrase 'apud', which are discussed in Chapter 8, and the entries for properties in the dioceses of Llandaff and Worcester, some of which carry details about land, livestock and other assets.

this area are unrecorded in the survey[23], and combined with the low valuation of the corresponding Wilton estates, it misrepresents the impact of monastic influence in this part of the region.

The densest areas of monastic settlement in 1291 were, for Somerset, across the Somerset Levels, due to the large size of the Glastonbury Abbey estates, and in the north west of the county, around Bath and Frome, where it is the proliferation of small properties rather than their size or the dominance of one particular landowner that is notable. This presumably reflects the potential of the rich agricultural land on the fringes of the Mendip Hills and Avon Valley, as well as the accessibility of the area to important centres such as Bath, Trowbridge and Bristol. In Wiltshire, the large scale of the estates held by Malmesbury Abbey in the north and Wilton Abbey in the south is visible in the overall distribution pattern, creating concentrations of monastic estates around each house. The north of Wiltshire generally had a high level of monastic temporal property, which again reflects the potential of the agricultural land in the area, as well as the high number of middle-sized monastic houses founded there in the post-Conquest period (e.g. Bradenstoke, Stanley, Monkton Farleigh, Lacock). The tendency of the temporal property to cluster around secular foci is also more notable in Wiltshire than in Somerset, with significant commercial and administrative settlements such as Marlborough, Wylye, Stapleford and the Wilton-Salisbury district containing properties belonging to a number of different houses.

[23] The abbey's estate at Bradford-on-Avon is similarly absent from the survey and cursory examination suggests that the overall survey of the monastery within the document is poor.

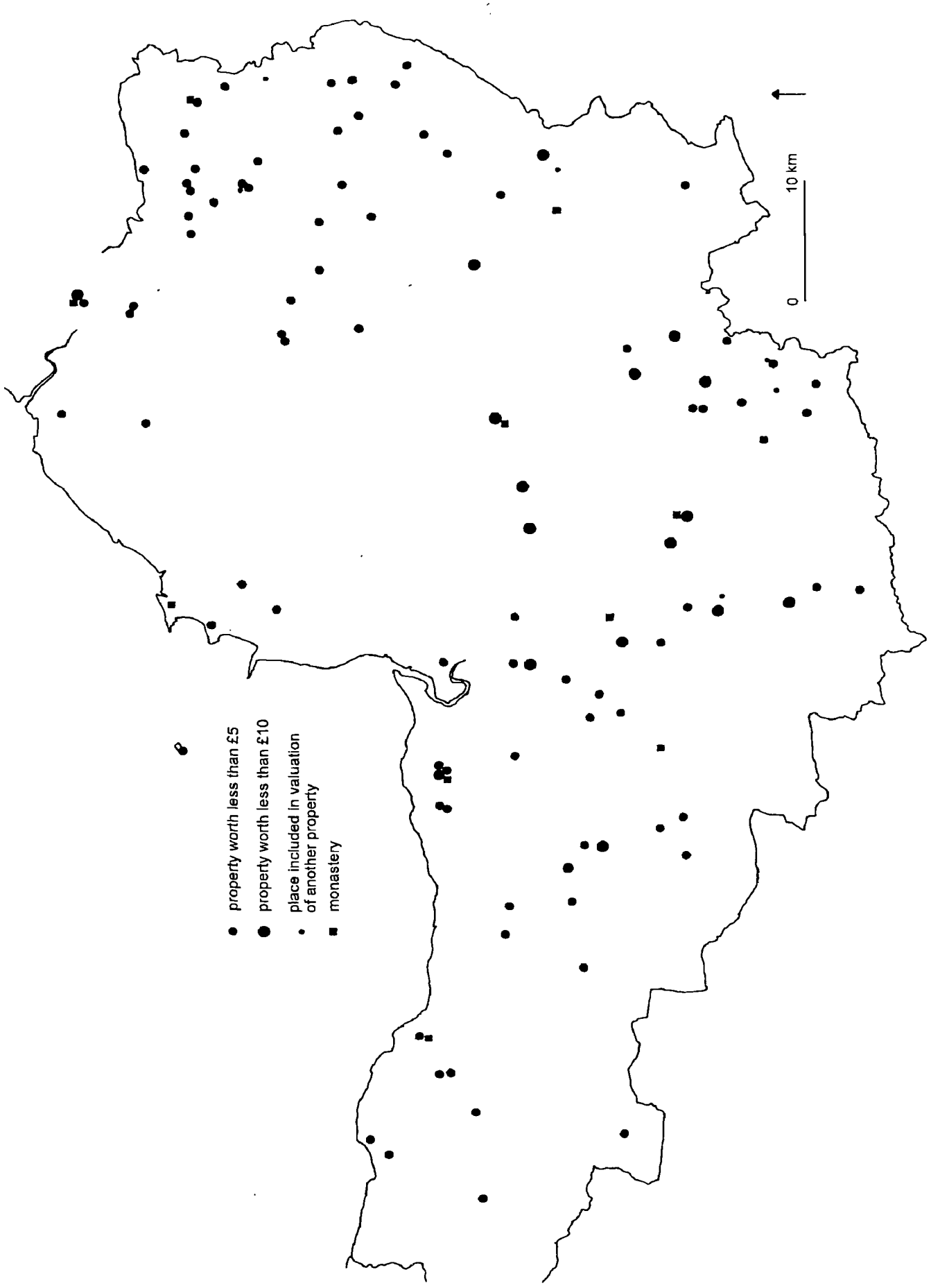

Figure 7.18 Distribution of temporal property worth less than £10 in 1291 Somerset

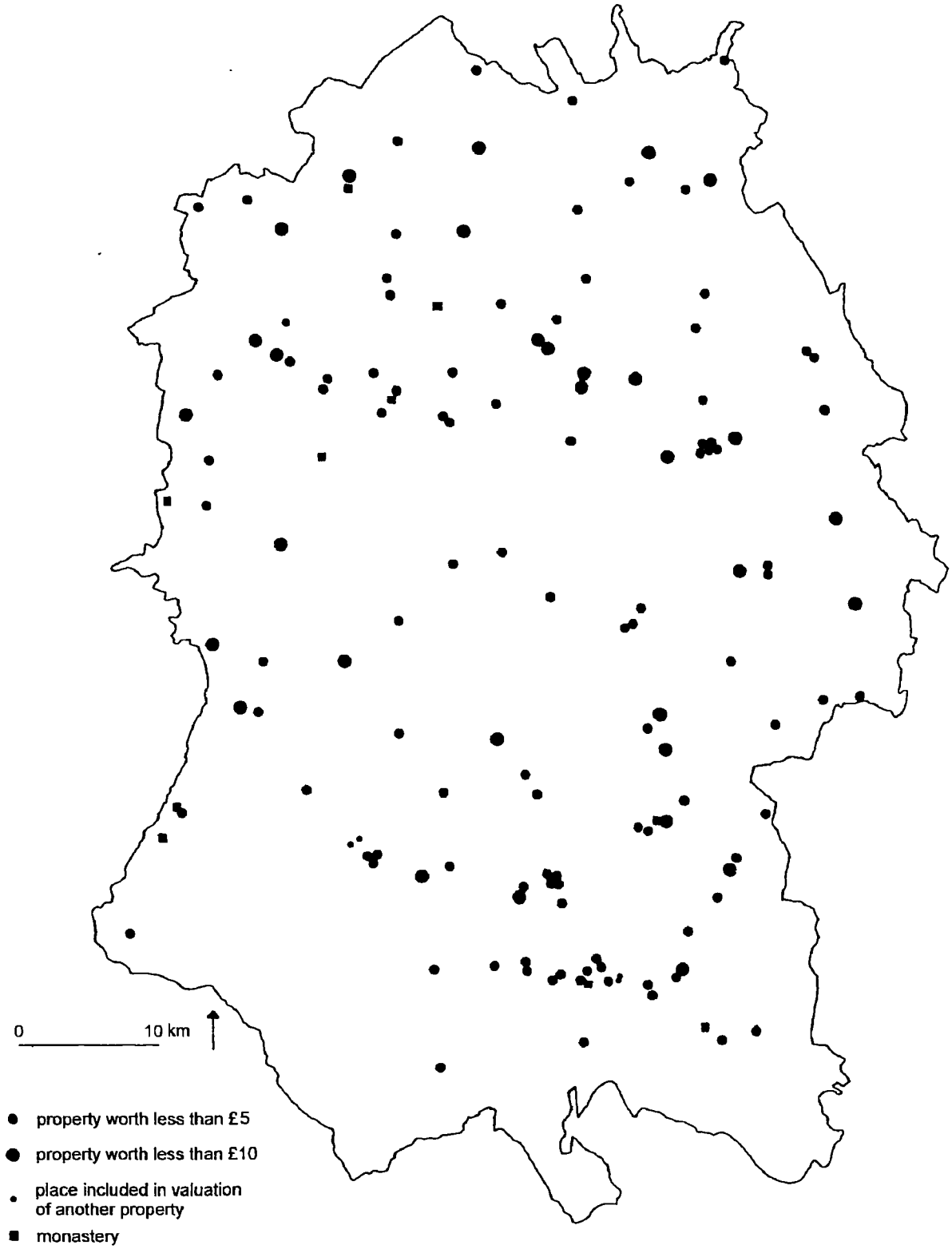

Figure 7.19 Distribution of temporal property worth less than £10 in 1291 Wiltshire

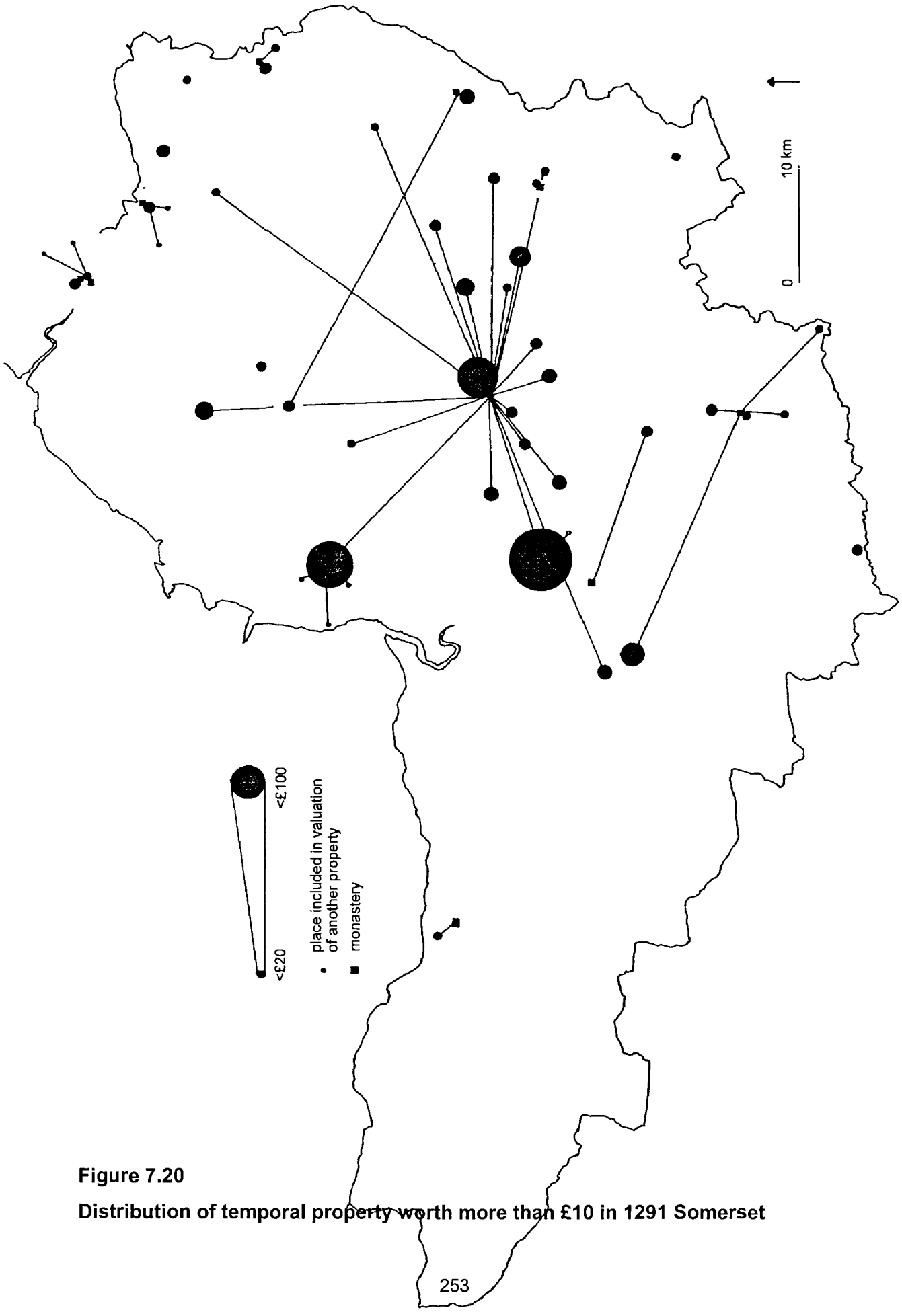

Figure 7.20

Distribution of temporal property worth more than £10 in 1291 Somerset

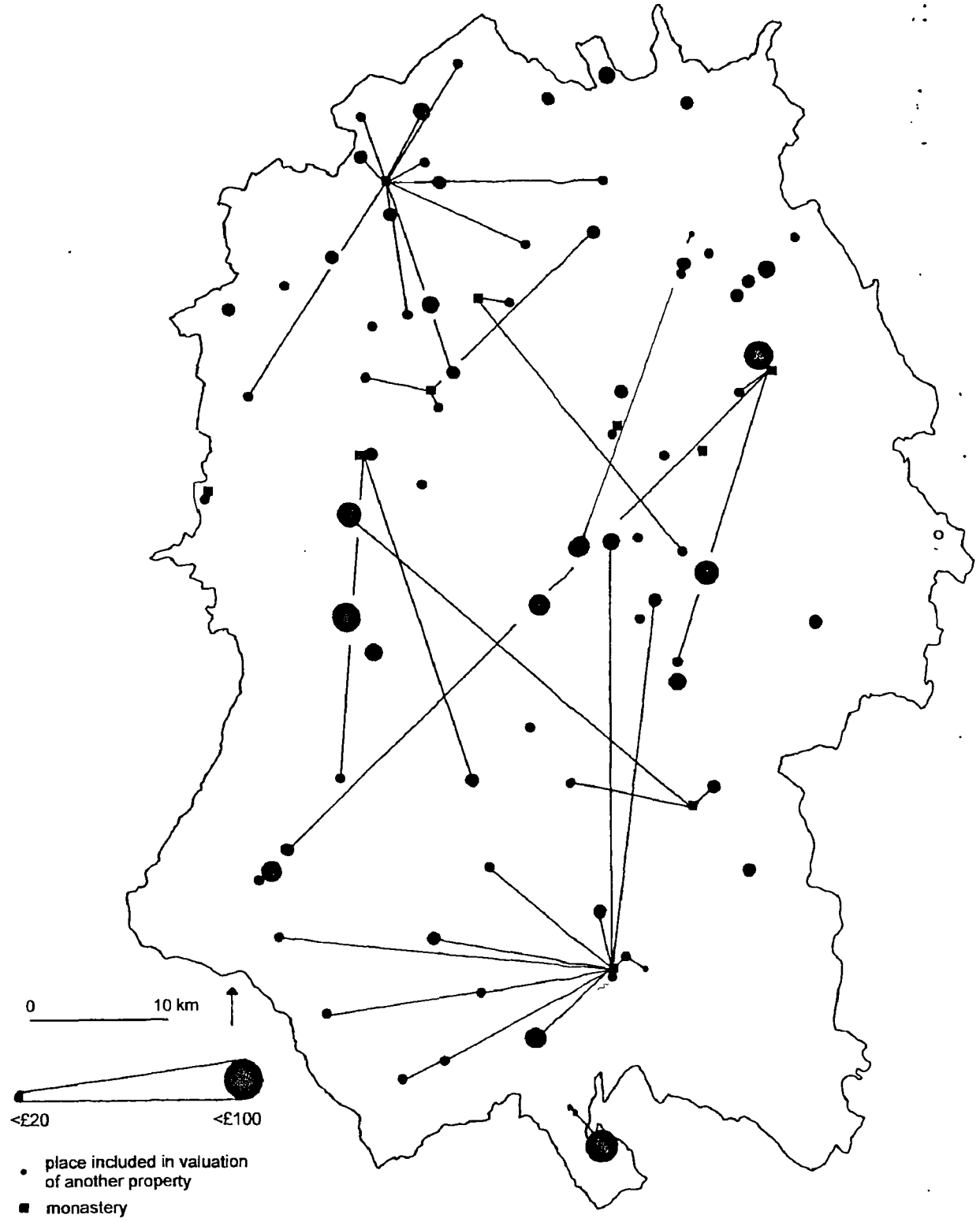

Figure 7.21 Distribution of temporal property worth more than £10 in 1291 Wiltshire

7.3.3 Distribution of temporal property in 1535

660 entries of temporal property have been catalogued from the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* in this study, of which 532 lay in Somerset, Wiltshire and wider Bristol[24]. In value, 58% of these estates were worth less than £10 (Figure 7.22). As in 1291, many of the most valuable properties were owned by Glastonbury Abbey, the two largest being its estate at Damerham (Wiltshire) at £142, and the home manor itself at £344. However, the spread of valuable properties was much greater than in 1291, with about one third worth between £10 and £60. The estates belonging to the houses founded in the pre-Conquest period, to houses of the black monks, nuns and canons founded after the Conquest, and the houses of the new and military orders have been mapped separately (Figures 7.24-7.29), to facilitate analysis of the impact of the different types of monastic houses in the region. It is gross, rather than net values that are mapped throughout.

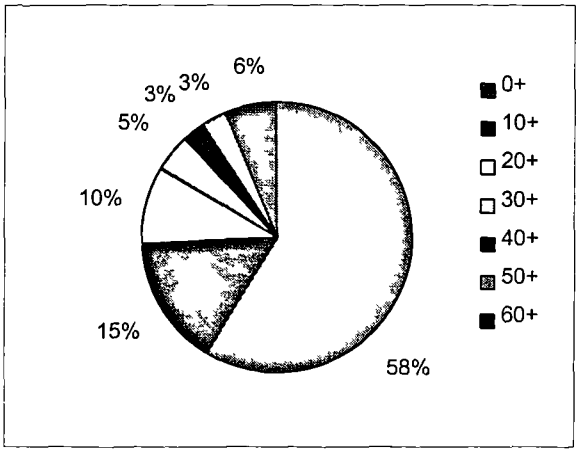

Figure 7.22 Value of individual temporal estates in 1535 (£)

The breakdown of each temporal entry into assessed elements varied in detail from house to house. Just over 80% of the entries refer to landed wealth, that is, income derived from agricultural concerns rather than urban, commercial or other interests, although in fiscal terms they represented over 95% of the temporal wealth in the

[24] See footnote 21

survey for the region[25]. Nearly half of these agricultural entries were of a standard manorial-type[26]. These were sometimes explicitly described as manors, and contained tenanted land, commonly described as held in free and customary tenure. This was the main element of the revenue, which was often supplemented by a manorial court, and sometimes demesne either leased or in hand as well. In addition, many included sundry fines and other profits, and a small proportion derived revenue from woodland. The other half of the entries included many of these elements, but contained no reference to a manorial court or manorial status, and in some cases nothing more is recorded than a rental value (*redditus assis'*). Several detailed entries included items such as fisheries and mills, although their inclusion in the survey must be regarded as far from comprehensive. The most remarkable entry in the survey for the region was that of Wilton Abbey, where a large proportion of the revenue was derived in kind and was detailed as such. The remaining 20% of the temporal income included urban revenue or individual properties (*tenementi, cottagii*), mills or administrative income, such as from hundredal jurisdiction, and markets. The figures record this distribution for these three categories of property-revenue from manors or granges, rents and payments and urban and individual properties[27].

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[25] Sav ne (1909: 140) estimated (rather than calculated) the value of agricultural revenue to be approx mately 80% of the gross temporal income. The calculation for the regon suggests that this reflects the proport'on of agricultural property in terms of numbers of properties of each character, but underest mates its fiscal revenue to the monasteries.

[26] The record ng of manorial status in the survey is far from uniform (Savine 1909: 141). In th s thes s, it considered to be any entry specifically described as such, as well as any where a manoria court s ment oned.

[27] Gross values from the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* are used in the distribution maps throughout the rest of th s chapter.

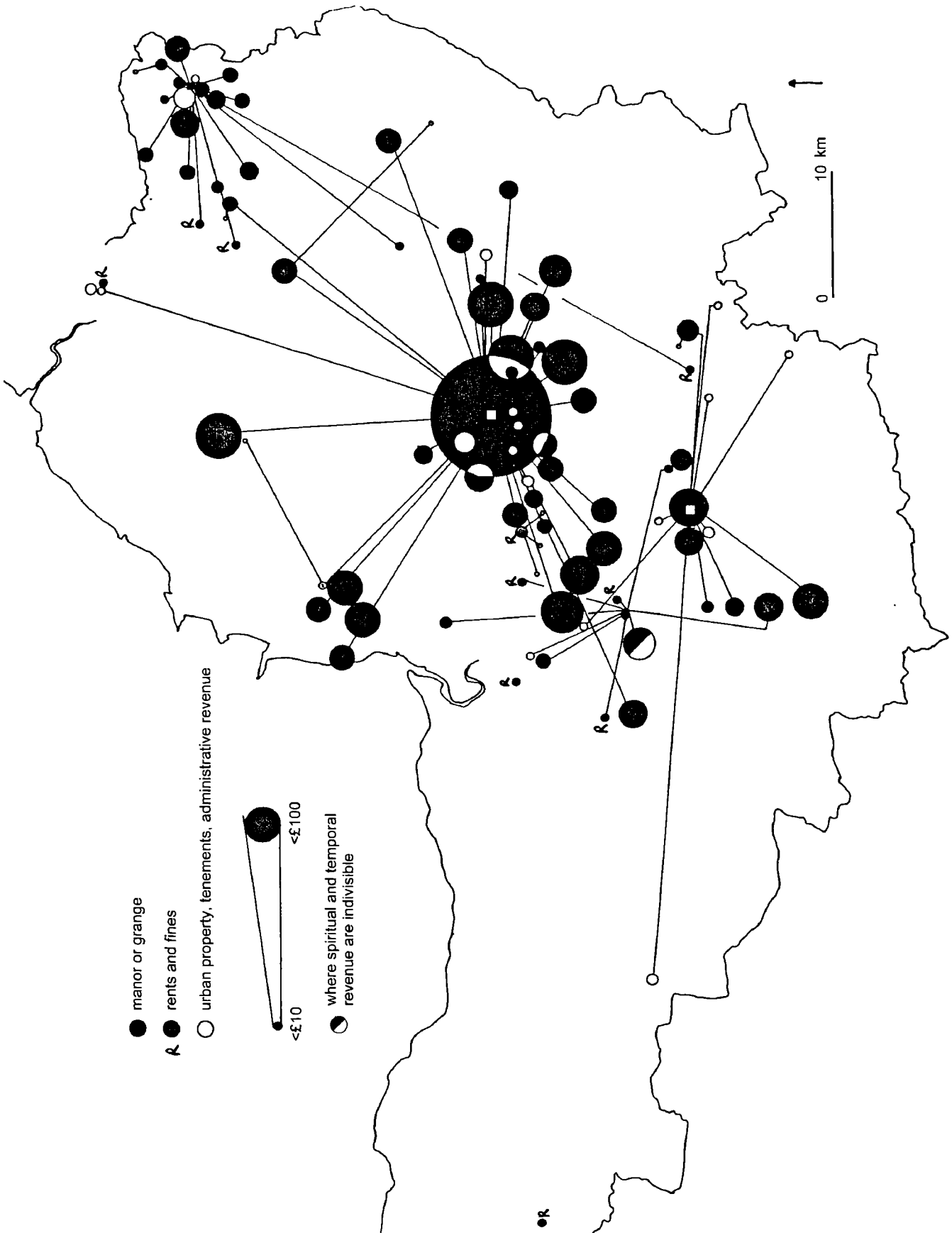

Figure 7.23 Distribution of temporal property in 1535 Somerset, pre-Conquest houses

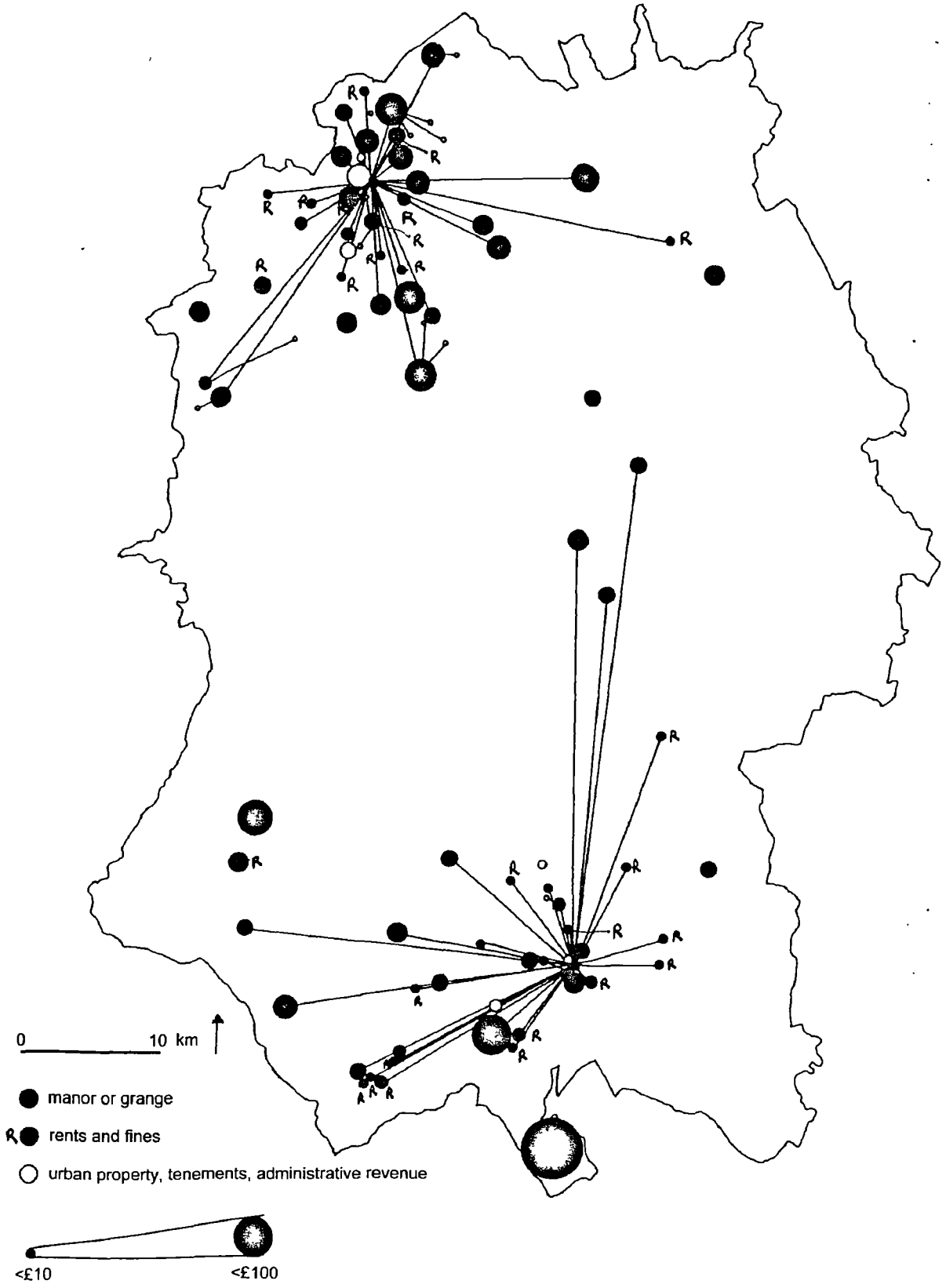

Figure 7.24 Distribution of temporal property in 1535 Wiltshire, pre-Conquest houses

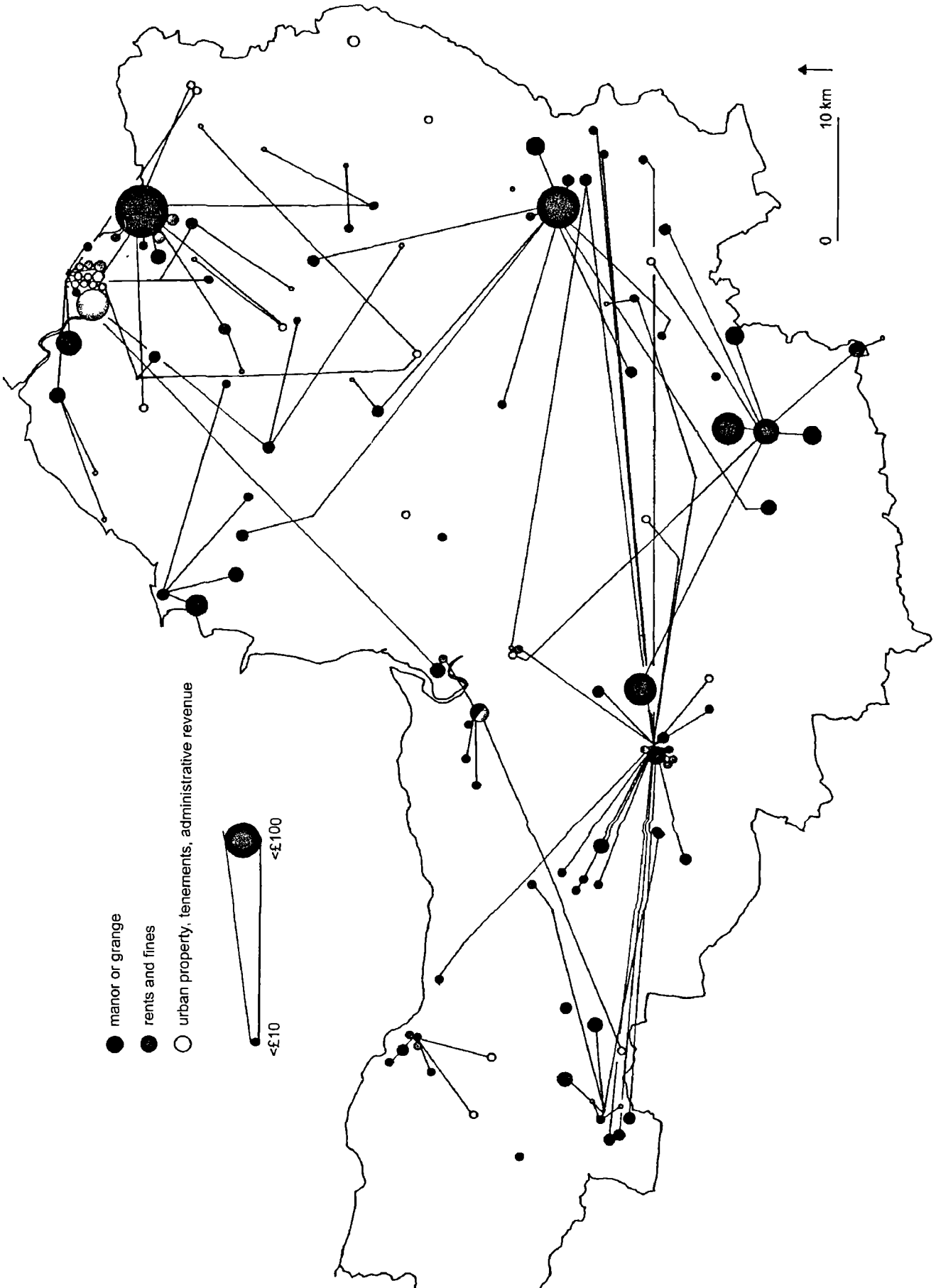

Figure 7.25 Distribution of temporal property in 1535 Somerset, post-Conquest black monks, nuns and canons

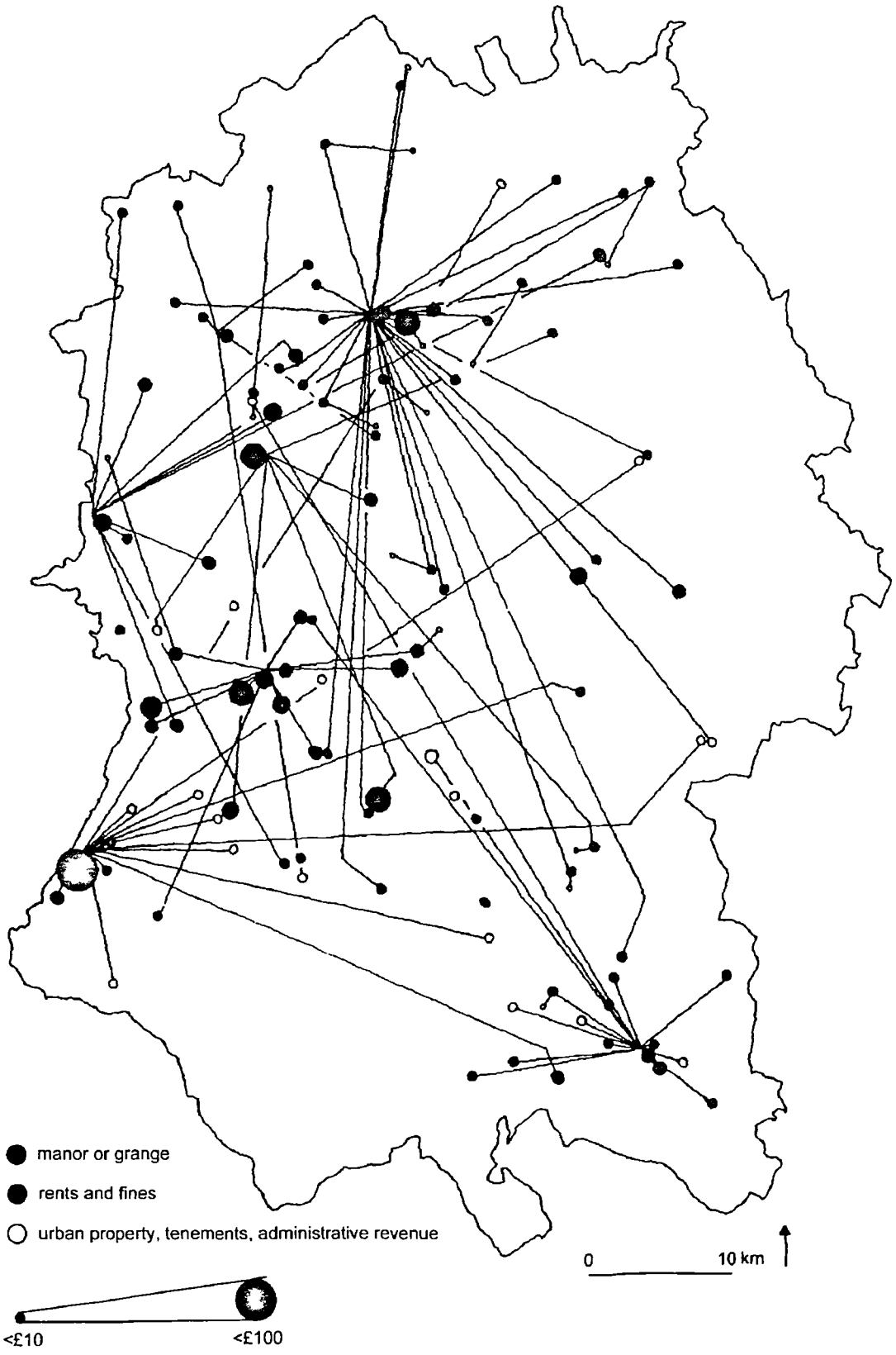

Figure 7.26 Distribution of temporal property in 1535 Wiltshire, post-Conquest black monks, nuns and canons

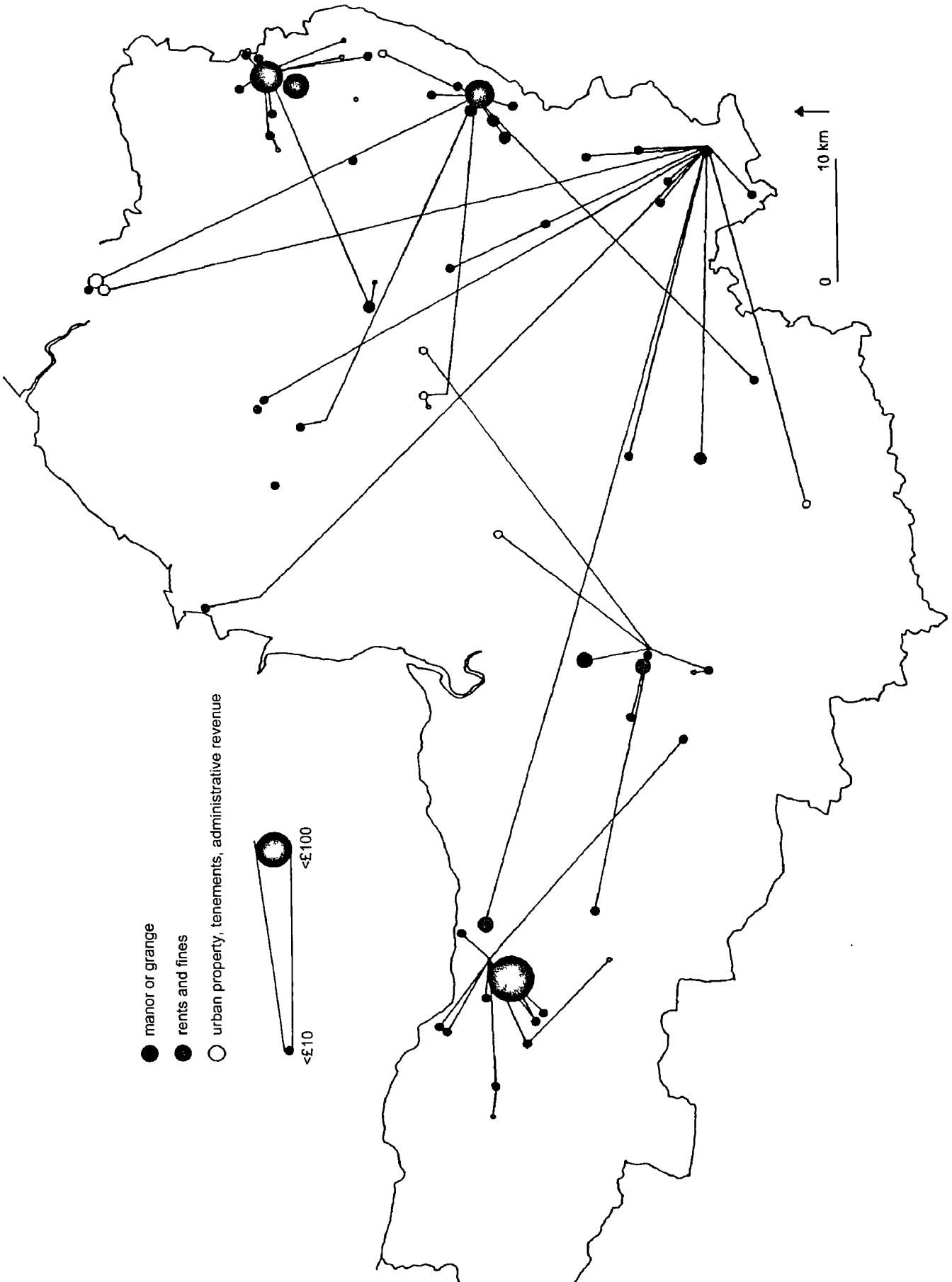

Figure 7.27 Distribution of temporal property in 1535 Somerset, new and military orders

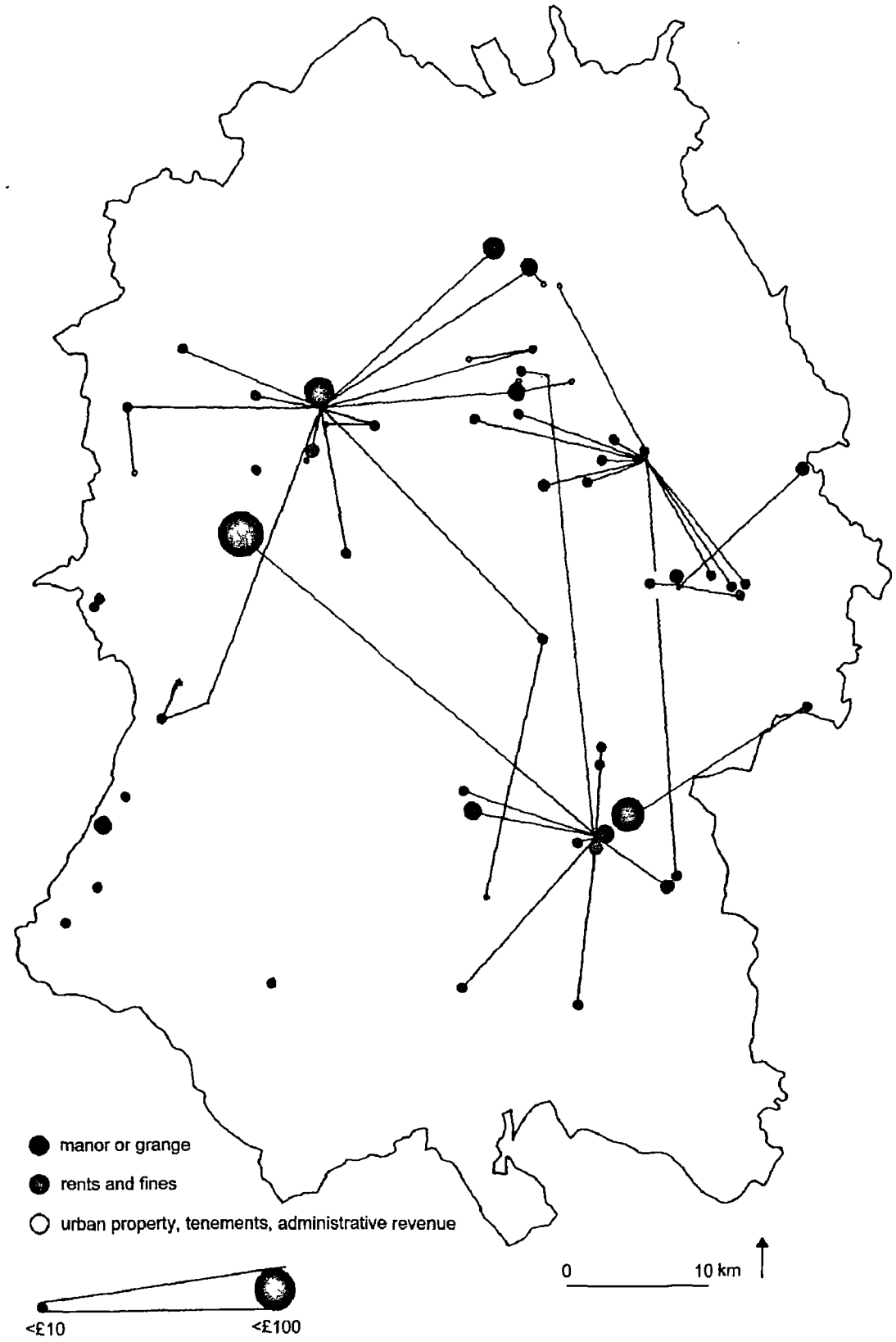

Figure 7.28 Distribution of temporal property in 1535 Wiltshire, new and military orders

7.3.4 Discussion

The pre-Conquest houses

Comparison of the distribution maps demonstrates vividly the degree to which the pre-Conquest foundations and their estates dominated the monastic landscape of the region throughout the Middle Ages until the Suppression. In 1291, it was the estates of Glastonbury, Malmesbury and Wilton that formed the bulk of the more valuable properties across the region, and even by 1535, there were few properties belonging to the post-Conquest foundations in the region that could challenge the size and number of those belonging to the pre-Conquest foundations.

Figure 7.23 and Figure 7.24 also demonstrate a remarkable similarity to the pattern of estates at Domesday and suggest a strong degree of stability and continuity of estates for these foundations throughout the Middle Ages. Although in 1535, the estates are often enumerated in smaller manorial units than in 1086, overall they represent a similar distribution, with remarkably few major additions or omissions. In Somerset, the estates of Glastonbury Abbey occupy a swathe across the centre of the county, centred on the large home manor itself, with the large outlying manors at Brent and Wrington to the north.

The expansion of Glastonbury Abbey's endowment in the tenth century to include several valuable properties in Wiltshire, including Damerham, Longbridge Deverill and a suite of estates in north west Wiltshire, can likewise be traced throughout the Middle Ages. Damerham in particular was one of the largest monastic estates in the county. Overall however, the two groups of estates belonging to Malmesbury and Wilton Abbeys dominated monastic ownership in the county in all the surveys. As in 1086, Malmesbury's estates in 1535 formed a compact group in the north west of the county, Wilton's a more widely distributed pattern across southern Wiltshire, with the outlying group retained on the Marlborough Downs to the north.

The estates of Bath Priory and Muchelney and Athelney Abbeys in contrast, were much smaller in value and as compact in 1535 as they appeared in Domesday Book.

The rise in assessment in 1535 compared to earlier valuations has already been noted, particularly for Muchelney and Bath, and it is suggested that these represent a genuine increase in fiscal worth. Although both enjoyed continuing patronage throughout the later Middle Ages, in neither case can this increase be attributable to major new acquisitions, the distribution and extent of their estates being remarkably stable. Instead, they appear to have capitalized on the resources available within their existing endowment, Muchelney improving its manors on the Somerset levels (Mann forthcoming). In his detailed study of Keynsham Abbey, Prosser (1995: 200) concluded that it was the compact nature of its relatively small-scale estates that allowed the abbey to manage and exploit them to maximum effect in the later Middle Ages, and a similar model is applicable to nearby Bath, whose properties were similarly consolidated but not extensive.

Indeed, the predominantly manorial organization of the estates of the pre-Conquest houses visible in 1535 is striking. Far more than the other houses, the endowment of the pre-Conquest establishments was recorded in the survey organized into estates explicitly described as manors or under the administration of a manorial court, no matter their size. The number of parcels of land and rent revenue held by each was small in number and value within the economy in comparison. Again, this reflects the ancient nature of the majority of their estates, which meant that they held strong lordship within the regional landscape from an early date, and enjoyed a long time span over which to consolidate and manage these estates.

The post-Conquest orders of black monks and canons

The mapped estates of the post-Conquest foundations of the black monks, nuns and canons were widely scattered across the region, and present the most varied distribution of any of the houses. This reflects the many different type of houses embraced within the category and the varied origins and character of their endowment.

Figure 7.25 is dominated by the estates of the Cluniac Priory at Montacute and the two largest Augustinian foundations in the survey for the region, Bruton and Keynsham Abbeys. The wealth of both Augustinian houses was centred on the large

home manor, which contained a borough and hundredal centre, both under monastic control. Outside this, they held a scatter of estates, fairly numerous but small in value and comprised of both manors and rental revenue. In contrast, the endowment of Montacute Priory, more than any other post-Conquest house in the survey, consisted of a small but evenly distributed collection of valuable manors across south east Somerset.

The other large Augustinian house in Somerset, at Taunton, held a large quantity of manorial estates, but they were widely distributed and small in value. Its property in and around the borough of Taunton consisted of several different rents and interests, reflecting the fact that it was not a monastic borough. Indeed, throughout the survey, the difference in landholding between houses that controlled a borough within the home manor (Bruton, Keynsham, Glastonbury, Montacute) and those which owned property in the nearby royal or ecclesiastical borough (Wilton, Taunton, Bath) is marked. Similarly in Bristol, St James Priory held a proliferation of small interests in and around the town, as did several other monastic houses. The estates of St Augustine's Priory, which included considerable property in Bristol, have been mapped from post-Suppression accounts (Sabin 1960). Its great wealth is not reflected within the study region, its most valuable manors, such as Ashleworth, Almondsbury and Berkeley, lying in Gloucestershire, on the rich agricultural land north of Bristol.

Figure 7.26 presents a very different distribution picture to that for Somerset. Here, the monastic endowment was made up of smaller properties, more widely distributed across the region, and the organization of each monastery's estates appears very different to that in Somerset. The late foundation at Edington, one of the largest post-Conquest establishments in the region, is striking in the manorial organization of its estates in the survey and their compact nature. This probably reflects the deliberate policy of acquisition and consolidation undertaken by its founder William of Edington (Stevenson 1987). Similarly, Monkton Farleigh, like its Cluniac sister at Montacute, held a selection of small but manorially organized estates.

In contrast, the remainder of the post-Conquest black order houses held an endowment that consisted of a mixture of rental revenue, parcels of land and manorial estates, many of which were located at a great distance to the house itself.

The dominance of the home manor seen in Somerset, cannot be identified to the same degree in Wiltshire, apart from at Lacock. Apart from the home grange at precinct at Ivychurch, neither it or Maiden Bradley, also in the south of the county, held any estates described as manors in the survey. The majority of their properties were thus small properties, some over 50 km from the house. Likewise Bradenstoke Abbey in northern Wiltshire, probably held the most widely scattered and numerous estates of any house in the region, the majority of which were worth less than £10. Although some attempts at consolidation by the priory can be identified, the wide distribution of its properties in its cartulary, not only on Somerset and Wiltshire but across the country is remarkable, and it appears to have pursued a policy of leasing and collecting rental revenue instead from the thirteenth century onwards (London 1979).

Finally, the alien houses recorded in 1291 generally only held one or two manors, similarly to the situation in 1086. Avebury, for example, held property in its home manor and nearby Ogbourne St Andrew, whilst Corsham only held the home manor itself. The exceptional alien priory was Ogbourne, which held an endowment consisting of estates both numerous and valuable. Few of these however, lay within Somerset and Wiltshire, its great wealth deriving from its administration of the widespread properties of Bec Abbey across the country.

The new and military orders

The estates belonging to the new and military orders throughout the region are notable for both their paucity and small size. A distinct pattern is visible from Figure 7.27 and Figure 7.28, the majority of houses holding one or two large properties adjacent to themselves, and the remainder of their estates being small and scattered.

The property of the two Carthusian houses in the region was centred in eastern Somerset and western Wiltshire. Both shared a remarkably similar pattern of endowment in which the core of their estates were early grants of land around the priory itself and on the Mendip Hills. Between 1291 and 1535 however, the accumulation of several other small properties can be identified, and both benefited

by the acquisition of land from dissolved houses. Witham obtained the English property of the French house at Preaux (Indre), Hinton that of the Augustinian house at Longleat. The initial endowment remained the dominant part of their economy throughout the Middle Ages however.

The two Cistercian houses displayed very different patterns of estates to each other. The estates of Cleeve Abbey were split between Somerset and the neighbouring counties of Devon and Cornwall and a very similar distribution of estates can be seen in both 1291 and 1535, despite the great disparity in fiscal valuations. The home manor of Cleeve itself dominated the abbey's revenues at both dates, representing nearly half of its temporal property in 1535. Outside Cleeve, it held valuable manors at Braunton (Devon) and Poughill (Cornwall), which together accounted for the majority of the temporalities. The remaining revenue was derived from small properties across Exmoor and in Taunton and Bristol.

In contrast, the majority of Stanley Abbey's estates lay between 10-20 km away, with some spread further afield again, and its wealth was distributed more evenly across its estates than Cleeve's. It held property all across mid-western Wiltshire, with some estates in Somerset and Gloucestershire as well, and one in Berkshire. Evidence about the history of estate acquisition by the abbey (Chettle & Kirby 1956: 269) suggests that Stanley pursued a deliberate policy of sale and rationalization through its life, which is supported by the much shorter and more compact list of estates in 1535 than 1291.

None of the military houses appear in the *Taxatio*, but Temple Combe, Rockley, Ansty and Buckland each appear in the survey of the Hospitaller order taken in 1338 (Larking 1856)[28], as well as Temple Combe and Buckland appearing in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*. Both Rockley and Ansty have a similar endowment pattern to the alien houses in 338, each primarily responsible for the administration of the home manor and another nearby property. In contrast, Buckland and Temple Combe both possessed widely scattered estates. The full temporal wealth of Buckland is not reflected in Figure 7.25, because the priory held valuable estates in Devon and Dorset. The wide distribution of the estates of Temple Combe reflect its early

[28] By this date, the Templar order had been suppressed, and many of its preceptories and properties incorporated into the Hospitaller order.

prominence as the key preceptory of the Templar order in the south west (Lees 1935: cxxxii), again with responsibility for the administration of numerous estates in the south west as well as within Somerset.

The estates of Amesbury Priory have been mapped with the new order houses rather than the pre-Conquest foundations because the majority of its wealth and estates by 1291 and 1535 were due to its refoundation in the twelfth century as a Fontevraultine house. The endowments of Henry II built upon the existing distribution of estates in Wiltshire and the hundred of Kintbury Eagle in Berkshire[29] and must be considered one of the most generous foundation grants of any of the post-Conquest houses in the region. The picture presented in 1291 and 1535 very much reflects this endowment, along with several key properties, such as Wigley (Hampshire) and the valuable manor of Melksham, acquired by the priory which appears to have been active in attracting patrons. It had also obtained the patronage of Pougley Priory (Berkshire) and administered its estates until its Suppression in 1527 (Peake 1924: 164).

Conclusion

The picture of temporal estates presented from the three sources is dominated by the pre-Conquest foundations. A large proportion of the landscape of Somerset and Wiltshire was already under monastic lordship by 1086, particularly the three houses of Wilton, Malmesbury and Glastonbury, with each monastic house being the primary landowner in its local area. These estates can be traced until the Suppression as the core of the monastic economy in the region.

In contrast, the estates of the post-Conquest houses were, on the whole, smaller and distributed differently across the region. The small quantity of new order estates is most marked. Their estates were generally centred on a large endowment at the

[29] Kintbury Eagle hundred was composed of the two Royal hundreds of the same names, and was united in the sixteenth century (Peake 1924: 208). The northern part of the hundred, which included several Amesbury properties, is now in the modern county of Oxfordshire. Kintbury consisted of two manors in the Middle Ages, one belonging to Amesbury, the other the site of another intended Fontevraultine foundation in Kintbury and later owned by the house of the same order at Nuneaton (Warwickshire) (Peake 1924: 208; Knowles & Hadcock 1971: 105). There appears to have been no connection between the two.

home manor, with just one or two large manors elsewhere, combined with a scatter of smaller properties, which were often later acquisitions. The two houses which represent an exception to this were the twelfth-century royal establishments at Amesbury and Stanley. Amesbury received an exceptionally generous foundation grant and Stanley held a broad range of valuable properties across its local area. The new order houses in southern Somerset-Cleeve, Temple Combe and Buckland, each held valuable estates in the south west peninsula.

The post-Conquest houses of the Benedictines and Augustinians were widely varying character. Their wide distribution and often relatively small size reflects an endowment created at a much later date than their pre-Conquest counterparts, and often built upon numerous modest gifts. However, as for the new order houses, establishments that enjoyed exceptional patronage, such as Edington Priory, could create a large and consolidated endowment, despite their late foundation.

Overall a hierarchy of wealth and estates can be proposed, firmly rooted in the historic foundation and aspirations of each house. The largest and wealthiest houses, particularly the pre-Conquest houses and largest Augustinian and Benedictine houses based in ancient towns and boroughs, held estates that were large in size and distributed in a consolidated fashion around the monastery. Their wealth stemmed not only from the size of their estates, but their dominant position in local manorial, hundredal and town administration, and the strong management and control of their property that resulted. Waites (1962) identified the same two factors in the distribution of the most prominent houses in North East Yorkshire, Whitby (Benedictine), Rievaulx (Cistercian) and Guisborough (Augustinian). Indeed overall, his conclusions for North East Yorkshire bear a remarkable similarity to those for Somerset and Wiltshire. He identified 'spheres of influence' for each monastery (1962: 492), within which the home manor or estate was dominant. This is also characteristic of the houses in the West Country, particularly the new order houses and older, wealthier houses.

What is however notable about the pattern in Somerset and Wiltshire is the smaller Benedictine and Augustinian houses and small new order houses[30]. Many were dependent on a distribution of estates that were significant at a local level, but several held properties that were widely scattered. Both suggest far less freedom or inclination on the part of their patrons to donate wide-ranging endowments and suggest that these houses were in effect 'slotted into' the existing monastic landscape.

[30] Waites (1962) did not consider these small houses, so this distribution element is missing from his study. North East Yorkshire was an area with a high number of small nunneries in particular, whose inclusion would influence the distribution pattern considerably.

7.4 The spiritualities

7.4.1 Spiritual property in 1086

Two churches in Somerset and eight in Wiltshire were held by monastic houses in 1086 and a further one at Ilchester in Somerset had also been so prior to the Conquest (Figure 7.30). This represents a sizeable proportion of the churches mentioned in the survey: of the twenty-six churches attached to royal manors in Wiltshire, eight (just under one third) were held by monasteries.

St Peter's Abbey, Westminster was the only English monastery recorded as holding a church in the region in 1086, that of Cricklade in Wiltshire, with 'many burgesses and the third penny of the same town' [Wi 9,1], which totalled £9 in revenue. The church was probably the parish church of St Sampson in the centre of the burh (Haslam 1982). Glastonbury Abbey had controlled St Andrew's Church, Ilchester before 1066, but this had been lost to the bishop of Coutances by 1086 [8,37]. This may have been an extra-mural minster at Northover near Ilchester (Dunning 1975).

The remaining nine churches held by monasteries were in the ownership of alien houses, confirming that the donation of churches to them was a common form of patronage in the immediate post-Conquest period[31]. Jumiegés and St Stephen, Caen each held a church in Somerset and Wiltshire. In Wiltshire, St Wandrille held three churches at Rushall, Upavon and Sherston [Wi 1,9;23], whilst Mont St Michel is recorded in possession of two churches in the manor of Wootton Rivers [Wi 1,15]. In addition, one of the ten hides at Brixton Deverill, held by Bec Abbey was in the possession of the church of the manor [Wi 17,1].

The Conqueror's own foundation of St Stephen's at Caen held the most valuable of the churches, Crewkerne, which had an extensive estate of ten hides attached [So 12,1]. The other establishments had smaller endowments of three hides or less, but

[31] See Matthew (1962: 54) on the donation of spiritual gifts to alien motherhouses. His comments about the likelihood of the foundation of English conventual priories by alien motherhouses granted spiritual gifts (ibid.: 27-29) are not borne out in the West Country, none of these churches apparently becoming so.

the majority fell into the category of small superior churches identified by Blair (1985: 112) as common in the western counties. They were royal manorial establishments with a sufficient endowment to suggest that they were important churches, secular ministers or prominent royal foundations. That these small but important churches were a focus for Norman patrons (ibid.: 105) is reinforced by the high level of their donation, particularly in Wiltshire, to French motherhouses.

7.4.2 Distribution of spiritual property in 1291

216 spiritual entries from the *Taxatio* have been catalogued in this study, of which 168 lay in Somerset, Wiltshire and Bristol. These entries covered interests in approximately 200 individual churches across fifteen counties. The interest in each benefice held by the monastery was listed as either a portion, pension, or the house was rector of the parish. As for the temporal property, the valuation of ecclesiastical revenue in the source was very low overall, the majority of entries being worth less than £10 (Figure 7.29). Some of the most valuable spiritualities were the interests held by alien houses in the region, such as the cells at Corsham and Stogursey, and property held by Ogbourne and Mont St Michel. The two rectories held by Glastonbury, and its pension in the church of Moorlinch were also amongst the greatest in value. Figure 7.31 and Figure 7.32 show the distribution of spiritual property in the region in 1291.

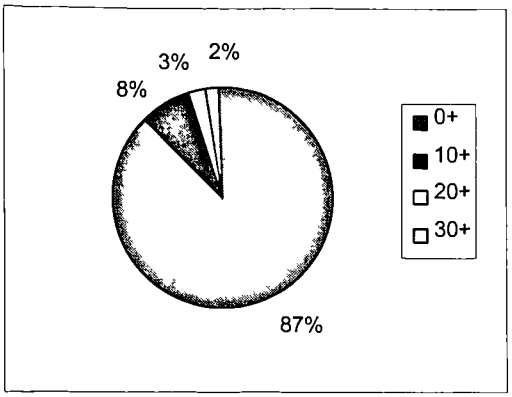

Figure 7.29 Value of individual spiritual properties in 1291 (£)

Rectories

Seventeen benefices were listed as monastic rectories, where the religious house had appropriated the benefice and its revenues. The majority of these rectories were in Wiltshire, Fawley (Berkshire), belonging to Amesbury Priory, and the two Somerset appropriations belonging to Glastonbury being the only exceptions. In a further thirteen entries, the church was simply recorded as the property of the monastic house and this is considered to have represented an appropriation as well. The total value of these thirty appropriations owned by fifteen houses, at c. £370, represented nearly one half of the total value of the monastic spiritualities recorded for the region.

Portions and pensions

The distribution of monastic portions and pensions across the West Country was not even and a distinct pattern emerges when they are plotted (Figure 7.31 and Figure 7.32). Portions were slightly less common than pensions, and they were not generally found in Somerset, only eight being held by five monasteries. All of the spiritual interests held in Bristol churches in 1291 were held as portions however. In contrast, the spread of pensions was much more even, although there were almost twice as many in Somerset as Wiltshire. If, as suggested in Chapter 6, the difference between the two represented the type of revenue received from spiritual interests, this distribution suggests that the leasing of spiritual interest in return for fixed sums was far more common in the Diocese of Bath and Wells than Salisbury by 1291.

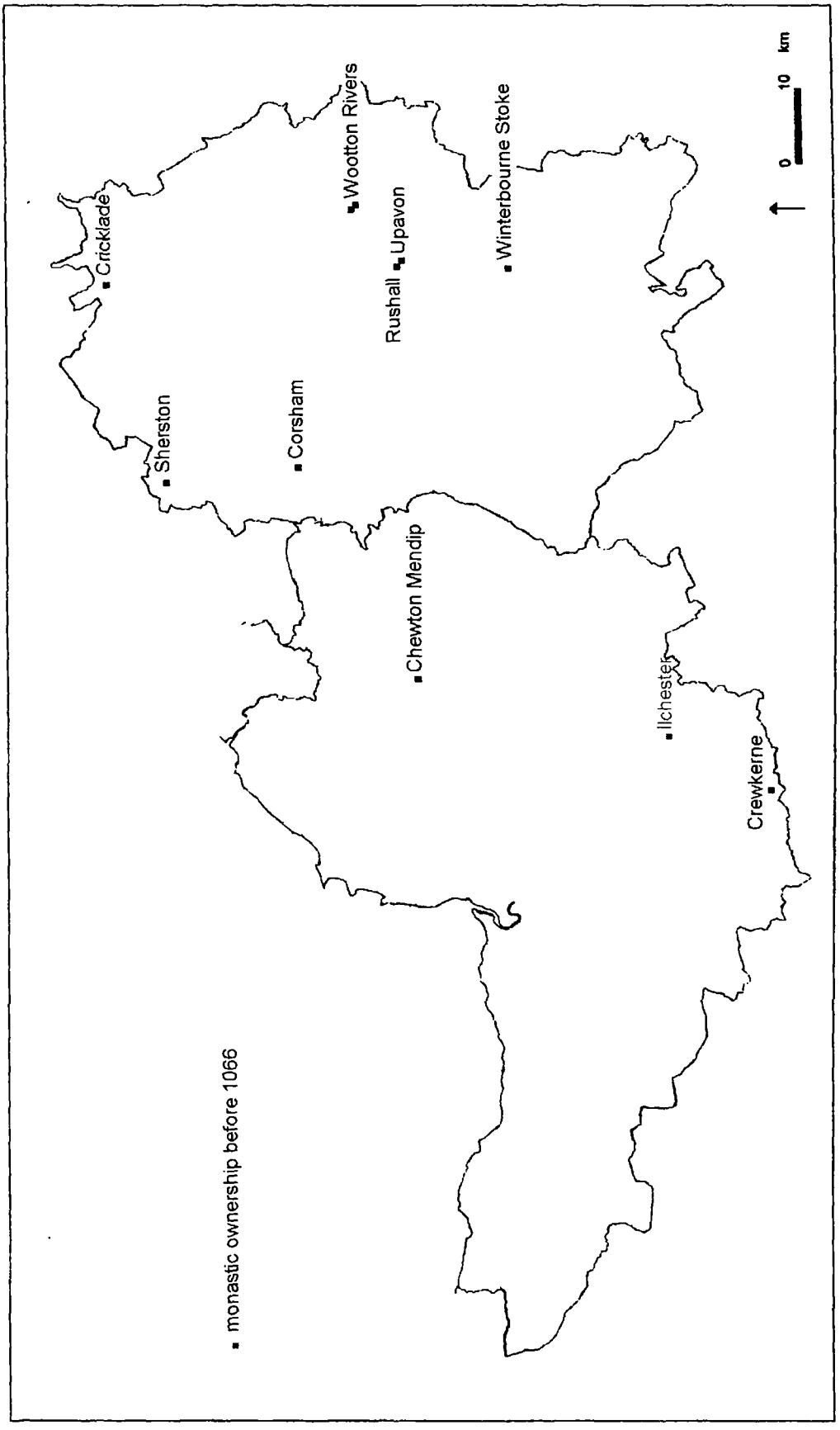

Figure 7.30 Churches held by monasteries in 1086

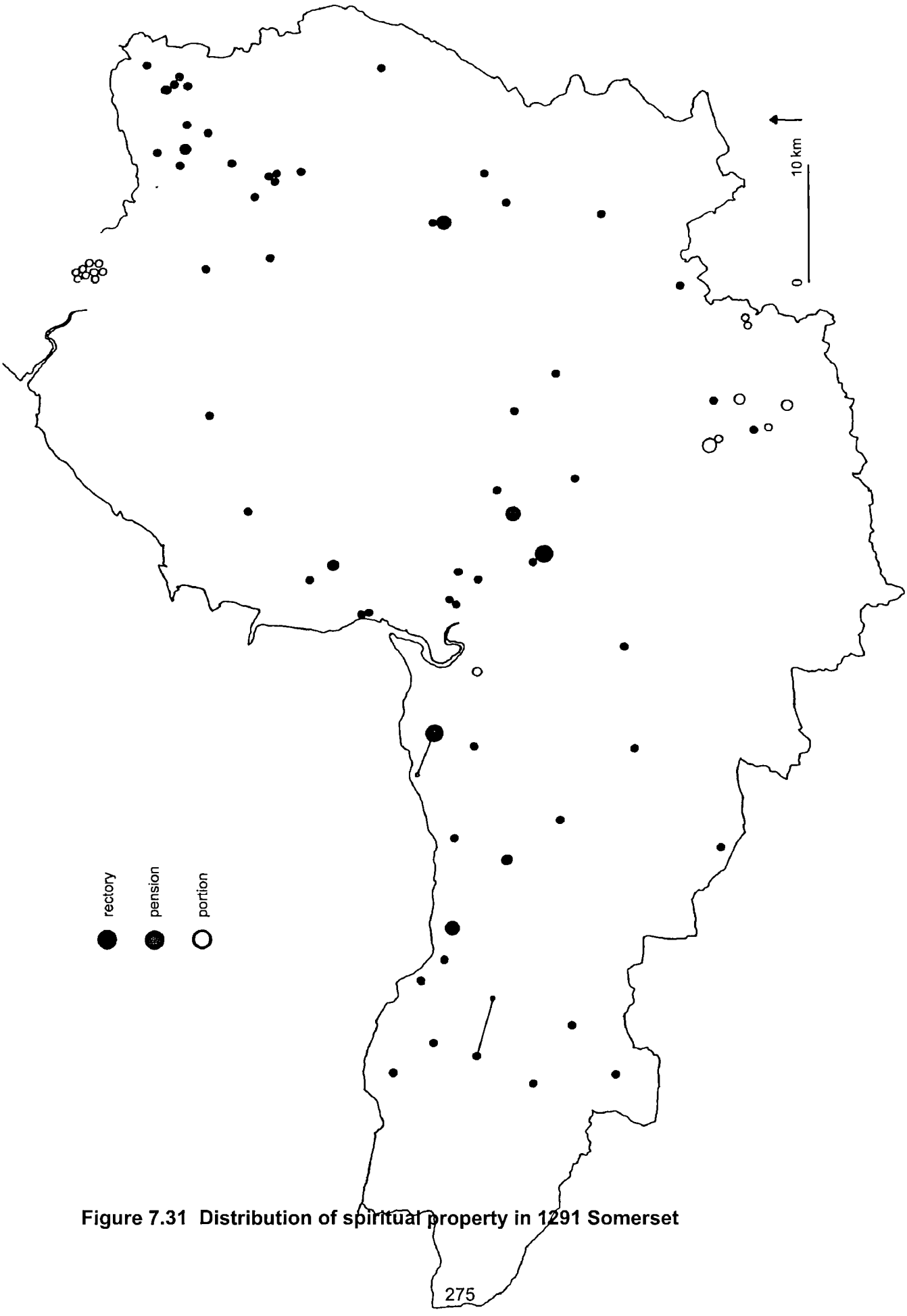

Figure 7.31 Distribution of spiritual property in 1291 Somerset

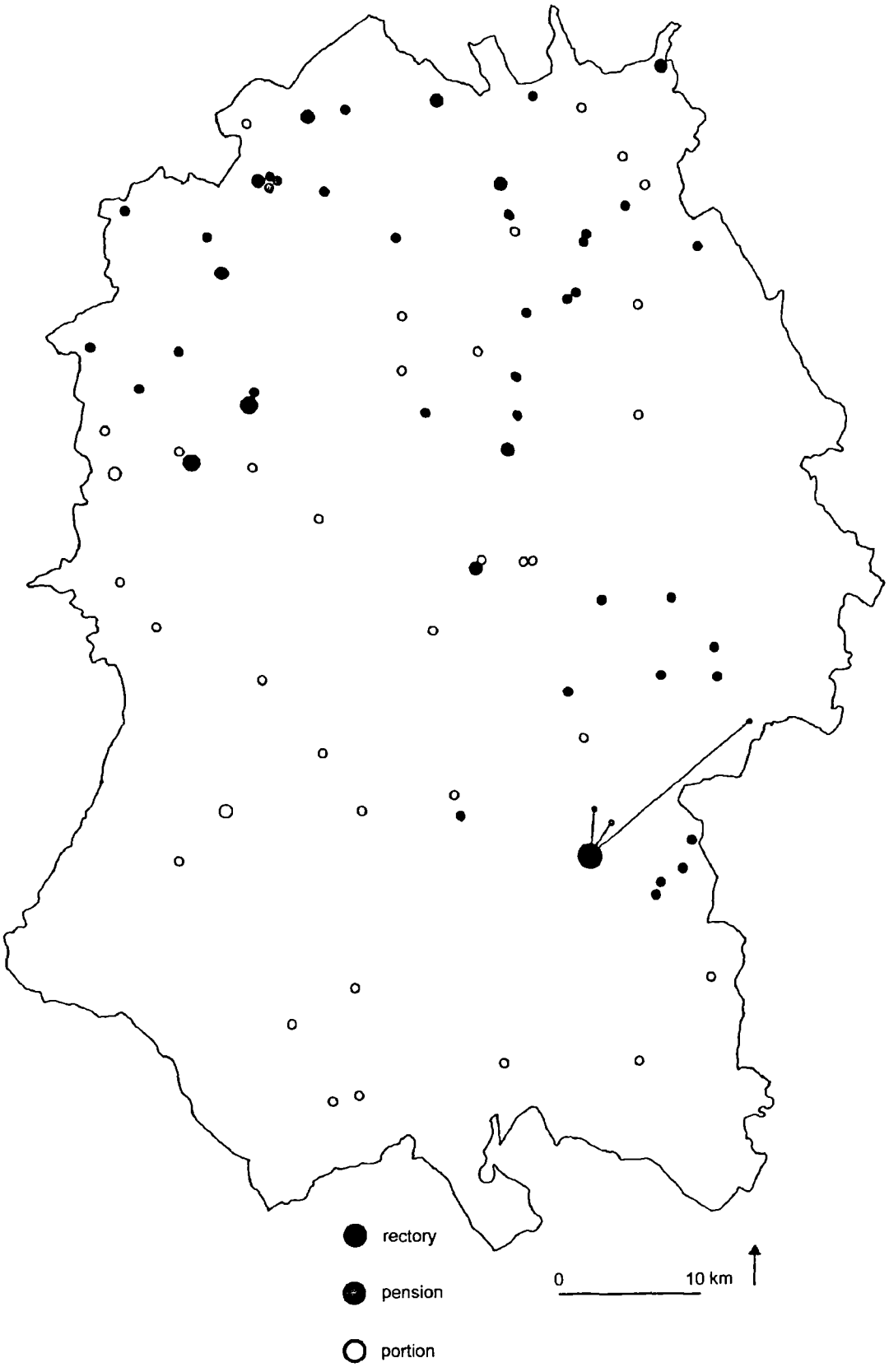

Figure 7.32 Distribution of spiritual property in 1291 Wiltshire

7.4.3 Distribution of spiritual property in 1535

304 entries of spiritual property have been catalogued from the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, of which 250 lay in Somerset, Bristol and Wiltshire. As in 1291, the majority of these entries were very low in value, 73% being worth less than £10 (Figure 7.33). The spiritual revenue is described in more detail in 1535 than in 1291, but essentially represents a similar pattern of endowment. Just over one third of the spiritual entries indicate churches appropriated by the monastery, referred to as rectories, parsonages or vicarages. For some, this income is simply recorded as deriving from the rectory, usually when it is at farm. In others, the revenue from tithes, pensions of various sorts, glebe land and other sundries are enumerated for the rectory as well. Rectories were, as in 1291, by far the most valuable of the spiritual properties, and represented two thirds of the overall spiritual revenue recorded in the study, whilst the remaining third catalogued was derived from tithes, pensions from the rectory or vicarage of a church, or from oblations and other payments.

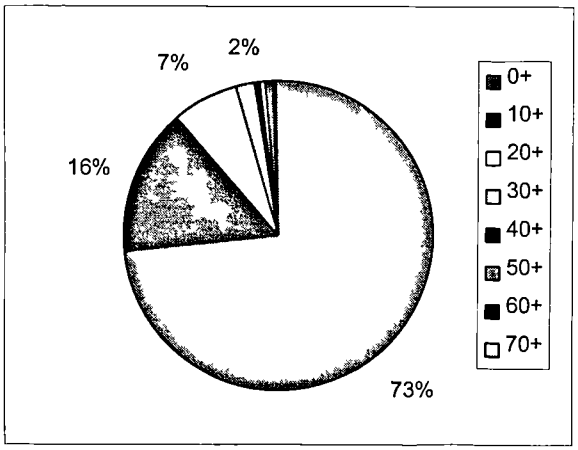

Figure 7.33 Value of individual spiritual properties 1535 (£)

Tithe revenue formed the bulk of spiritual revenue in 1535, being a substantial part of both rectorial and other income. About half of the spiritual entries in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* mention tithes (*decima*) of some sort; they relate to twenty-four of the houses listed. It is only possible to isolate the value of the tithe from other spiritual revenue in about two thirds of the entries relating to them. The value of these tithes to the twenty-four houses is over £575 compared to their total spiritual gross value of

over £1699. Equating the numerical and fiscal ratios between known and unknown tithe values produces an estimate of the speculated worth of all the tithes listed as £830, or 42% of the total gross spiritual value. This must be regarded as the minimum possible proportion of spiritual revenue derived from tithes, because a substantial proportion of the spiritual entries that do not mention tithes explicitly consist of revenue from the rectory or its farm, which probably included tithe income.

Savine estimated that 'the bulk of the spiritual income of the monasteries consisted of tithes of different kinds, which evidently amounted to no less than five-sixths of the whole' (Savine 1909: 107)[32]. If a substantial amount of the unspecified rectorial revenue is assumed to be tithe income, the proportion of overall spiritual income derived from tithes could approach this high figure. Whether Savine's high estimate is used or it is estimated simply at more than 42%, both indicate the importance of tithe revenue to the monastic houses in 1535. It was the primary component of the spiritual income, with fixed pensions of various kinds comprising the majority of remainder.

The tithes of a church could be divided in several ways, depending on the number and status of the tithe owners in the parish. The recording of tithes and the status of monastic benefices is not straightforward in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, but many of the tithes do appear to be those due to the monastery as rector of the parish (*decimae rectoriae*). The tithes are explicitly described as rectorial in only a handful of cases, but in many more, the unspecified tithes from a rectory or parsonage can be interpreted as such. Similarly, in a considerable number of cases, the monastery received revenue from the farm of the rectory on one hand, and tithes on the other, suggesting that they retained some of the tithes themselves. For example, Glastonbury appears to have retained the predial, most valuable, tithe in eight of its parishes, whilst farming out the other tithes and revenue of the rectory.

The most common split of tithes was between the rector and the vicar, the rector receiving the great tithes (hay, grain and wood) and the vicar the rest, which were the less valuable small tithes (Kain & Prince 1985: 10). Only Witham Charterhouse is explicitly described as holding both the great and small tithes of its rectory at Witham

[32] Although this appears to be based on estimation rather than calculation.

Friary. Bath retained the grain tithe of Corston and Wilmington, separate to the farm of the rectory and presumably other tithes. Taunton collected the tithe of grain or hay from 17 parishes, although it is not specified whether the monastery was rector or not in each case. The majority of the tithes listed for Malmesbury Abbey were hay and grain tithes, which had been farmed out to various collectors.

More than half of the tithes mentioned are described as predial or personal. This was a standard distinction for tithes on different types of produce. Predial tithes were traditionally the most valuable, and were levied on the fruits of the earth, primarily grain, hay and other crops (Kain and Prince 1985: 8). Personal tithes were levied on the profits of agricultural labour, but were largely restricted to fishing and milling (Little 1945). Interestingly, there is no mention of the third type of tithe- mixed- for the region, which was payable on animal products.

Predial tithes are far more common than personal tithes in the document, although in many entries they occur together. Personal tithes were in decline by the late medieval period (Little 1945: 67), but were clearly still of some relevance to the monasteries at this date, and indeed to clergymen generally (Kain & Prince 1985: 9). The recording of predial and personal tithes appears to reflect a quirk in the survey strategy, because they only occur in the surveys of ten of the Somerset houses, and none of the Wiltshire ones. For the cases where the value of predial and personal tithes of individual rectories and churches is given specifically, it ranges from 10s- the tithes taken by Cleeve Abbey from Lundy Island in the Severn Estuary- to over £24 for the tithes of the large parish of North Petherton, due to Buckland Preceptory, and in most of the cases, they represent virtually all of the revenue of the benefice.

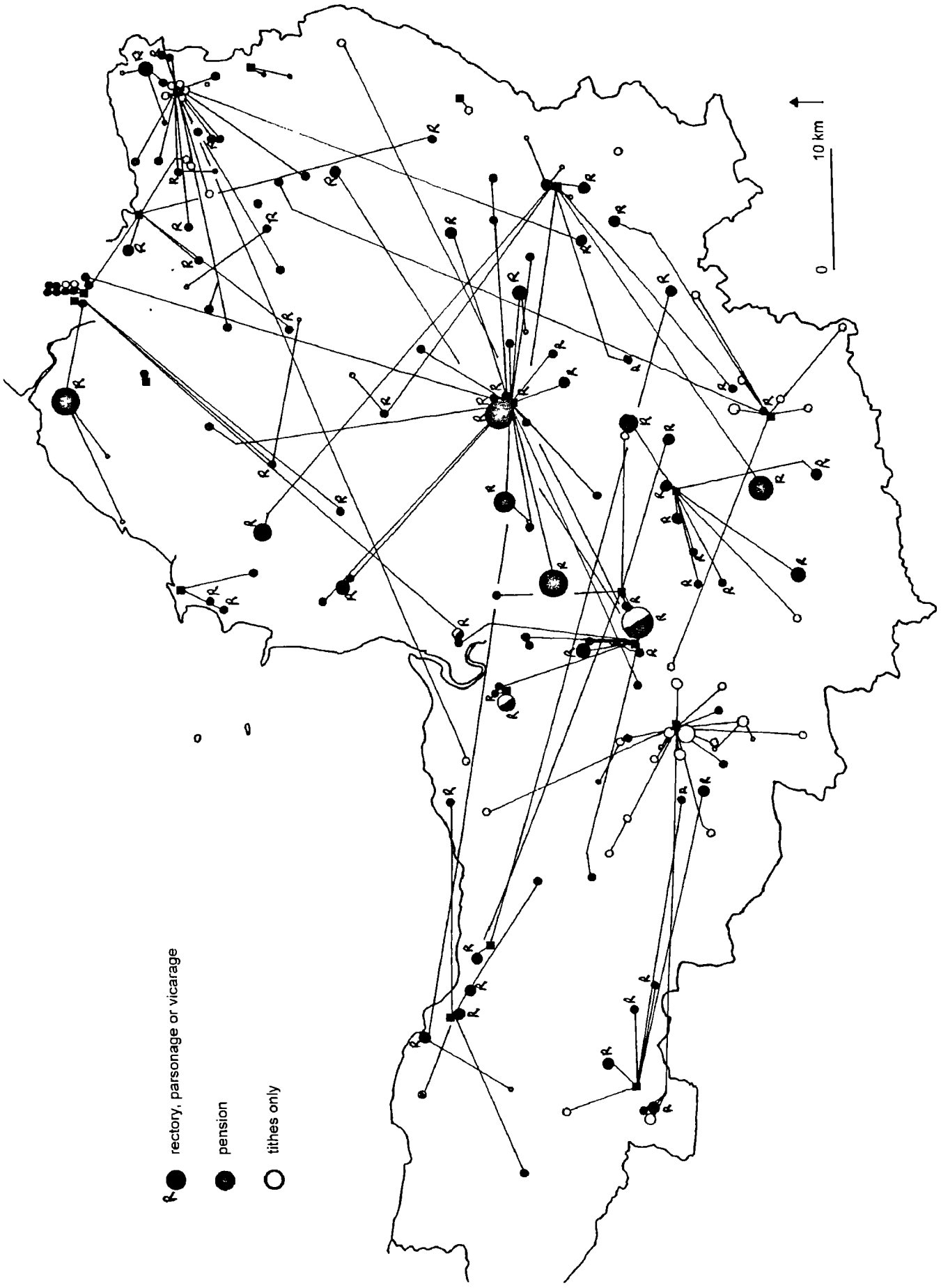

Figure 7.34 Distribution of spiritual property in 1535 Somerset

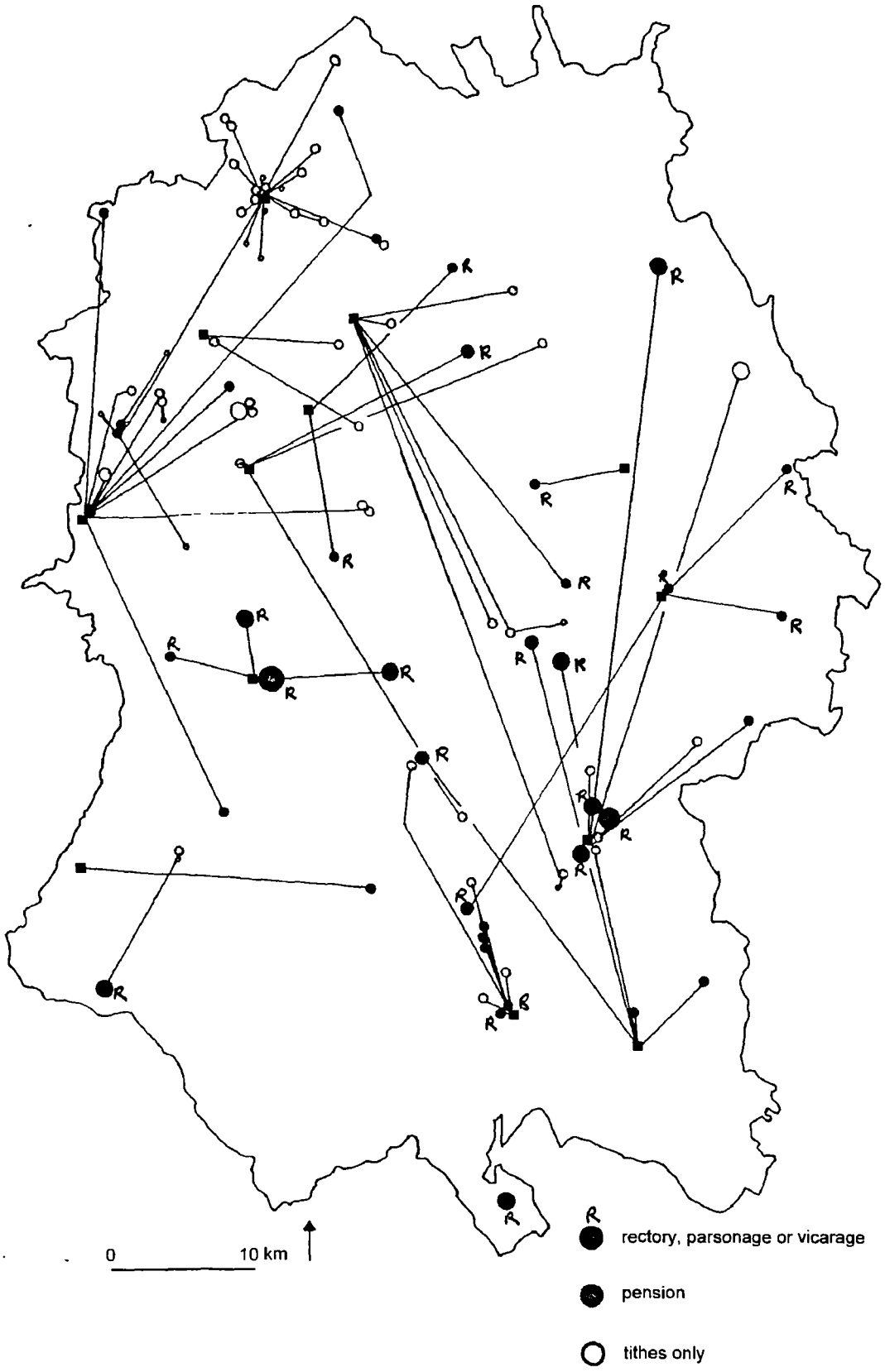

Figure 7.35 Distribution of spiritual property in 1535 Wiltshire

7.4.4 Discussion

In both 1291 and 1535, the significance of spiritual revenue compared to temporal can be calculated for the West Country houses in each source (Tables 12, 13, Appendix 1)[33]. In 1291, the average temporal income for any house was 73% of its total gross revenue, whilst in 1535, it was 78%: Spiritual income was thus 27% of the gross in 1291, and 22% in 1535 (Figure 7.36)[34].

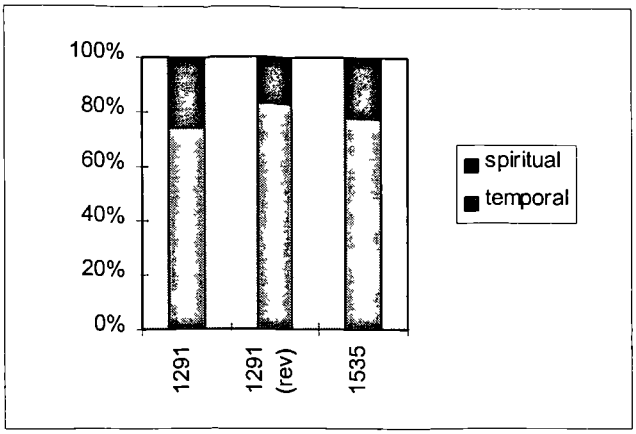

Figure 7.36 Relationship between temporal and spiritual income 1291 and 1535

The high percentage of spiritual revenue in 1291 is surprising given the often-repeated criticism of the incomplete nature of their recording in the source (see Chapter 6). The total does in fact require some caution. The lack of any recorded temporal revenue for the three Benedictine nunneries in the region heavily influences this total, and without them, the revised percentage of 17% provides a more reliable assessment of the average relationship.

The Augustinian canons are traditionally associated with the ownership of spiritualities. Robinson (1980: 172) estimated that spiritual income accounted for one third of the national revenue of the congregation in 1535, a significantly larger proportion than the national average taken across all houses. Within Somerset and

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[33] Major houses only, i.e. excludes alien cells.

[34] This ratio does not include the income in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* that cannot be established as either temporal or spiritual. This closely agrees with Savine's (1909) calculation of the relationship nationally.

Wiltshire, the Augustinian houses held only a slightly greater proportion the average in 1535 (21%). However, several of the Augustinian houses did hold a large number of spiritualities, particularly Bruton, Ivychurch and Taunton, each of which derived over 35% of their income from spiritual revenue. Both Cluniac houses were also notably well endowed with spiritual revenue in 1535, both receiving well over the average proportion of their income (25% and 29%) from it.

The composition and distribution of spiritual properties varied from house to house in 1535. The majority held a core of fully appropriated rectories and vicarages, combined with a scatter of pensions and tithe revenue. As with temporal revenue, the spiritual properties of the older Benedictine houses and larger post-Conquest houses most commonly consisted of full appropriations, distributed in close correspondence with their temporal estates. The monastery thus played a key role in the parochial, as well as manorial administration of its properties.

The notable exception to this pattern of appropriation was Taunton Priory. Its spiritual income was received almost entirely from tithes taken from parishes around the monastery itself. Taunton was an important minster church in the pre-Conquest period and administered the large manor of Taunton Deane, over which it retained burial rights until the later Middle Ages (Bush 1984: 105). Its receipt of tithe revenue in 1535 reflects its origins as a motherchurch and the dependent nature of later chapels and churches within the locality.

The smaller houses of the Benedictines and Augustinians held a far more scattered collection of spiritual revenue than their older and larger counterparts. Houses such as Bradenstoke, Lacock and Barlinch held pensions and tithes from properties at great distance to the house itself, whilst many of the smallest, like Woodspring and Barrow Gurney, held a few key spiritual properties near the monastery itself.

In contrast to the older orders, the effect of the prohibition on Cistercian and Carthusian orders owning spiritual property can be seen for the four West Country houses, as can the lapse of the ruling as the Middle Ages progressed. Overall, the paucity of their ownership of spiritual revenue is marked, and those they held were often late acquisitions. In 1291, less than 0.5% of the four houses' income was from

spiritualities, rising to 5% in 1535, compared to the average of c.20% at both dates for the houses of the region altogether (see Figure 7.36).

Neither Carthusian house received any spiritual revenue in 1291, but both did by 1535. The laybrothers' church within the liberty at Witham had become a parish church for a presumed lay population (McGarvie 1981), and thus the priory was in receipt of its tithes. Its other pensions from churches in Berkshire, Dorset and Warwickshire were acquired through the Suppression of the alien priories, from which many Carthusian houses benefited. They had previously belonged to the French house of Preaux (Indre). Similarly, Hinton was granted spiritual revenue at its home manors of Hinton and Norton St Philip from its foundation (Scott Holmes 1896: 486), and this remained its sole spiritual income throughout its life[35].

Cleeve Abbey owned the greatest amount of spiritual property of the two Cistercian abbeys, and this can probably be attributed to its late foundation date, by which time a degree of laxity about the ownership of spiritualities had arisen. Its spiritualities were still not numerous however, its principal rectories being at Queen Camel and Old Cleeve. The latter was held on lease from the French monastery of Bec from the early twelfth century (Dunning 1985: 51)[36]. In contrast, Stanley owned very few spiritual properties, although again, an increase in ownership can be seen. In 1291, it was recorded as retaining the tithes at a few of its temporal properties By 1535, it was recorded as holding two rectories and is known to have appropriated a third (Chettle & Kirby 1956: 271), although this appears to have been omitted from the survey.

The military houses surveyed in both 1338 and 1535 suggest differing approaches to the ownership of spiritual property. Temple Combe Preceptory received no income from spiritual property except one pension from Templeton (Devon) in 1535, whereas a substantial proportion of Buckland Priory's income was derived from spiritualities, Indeed, Buckland appears to have employed an approach to the

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[35] Hinton was recorded as the rector of both Norton and the chapel at Hinton in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* entry for each church [vol.1, 159]. However, no income to the monastery is recorded from either in 1291 or 1535.

[36] The omission of any spiritual entries for Cleeve in 1291 reflects the individual circumstances of the two rectories. Old Cleeve was still surveyed as a possession of Bec (under Ogbourne), and the fact that Queen Camel was at farm by this date meant that, under the principles of the survey, it was the lessee who was liable for taxation and not the abbey (Denton 1993: 238).

acquisition of spiritualities more similar to an Augustinian nunnery than military preceptory. Easton Royal held several rectories in north east Wiltshire and a considerable part of its endowment was made up of the revenues from them.

Finally, the Fontevraultine house at Amesbury also derived a considerable amount of revenue from spiritual property, primarily because a substantial part of its twelfth-century foundation grant had been composed of tithes and other spiritual property (Pugh 1956: 242). It owned one of the most valuable rectories in the region in 1291, consisting of the combined revenues of Amesbury, Bulford, Ludgershall and Durrington.

Conclusion

Generally, a similar pattern of endowment to that observed for temporal revenue can be proposed for spiritual income. The older and larger houses of the Benedictines and Augustinians were strongly involved in local parochial administration and gained much of their revenue from appropriated churches and tithes associated with the temporal estates they owned. The early foundation of monastic houses, such as Glastonbury or Montacute, or their association with earlier minster establishments, such as at Taunton or Bruton, was critical to the accumulation of spiritual revenue and the opportunity to consolidate and administer it. The other post-Conquest houses held a far more scattered spiritual endowment, created from a mixture of pensions, tithes and rectories which, like their temporal properties, suggest patronage with far more limited scope for the donation and improvement of estates. Finally, the new orders were marked in their absence from parochial interests, and their ownership of spiritual revenue throughout the region was minimal. Both double houses, however, Amesbury and Buckland, owned a considerable amount of spiritual property, and clearly cannot be regarded as new order houses in this respect.

7.5 Conclusion

By 1086, a substantial proportion of the landscape of Somerset and Wiltshire was dominated by monastic estates, and the extent to which the distribution viewed in Domesday reflects the ultimate pattern seen in 1535 is remarkable. The estates of the Domesday houses formed the core of the monastic landscape throughout the post-Conquest period. In 1535, the gross income of Glastonbury Abbey alone was more than one quarter of the total revenue of the thirty-three houses listed in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* for the region, and the other six houses another quarter again, their total gross income thus representing considerably more than half of the monastic revenue (Figure 7.37). They were in many senses the monastic skeleton of the region, which the post-Conquest houses merely fleshed out. Few later foundations could challenge the largest pre-Conquest houses in size and estates, and the small number of post-Conquest Benedictine foundations and new order houses can probably be attributed to the huge economic and social prominence of the Saxon monasteries of the region.

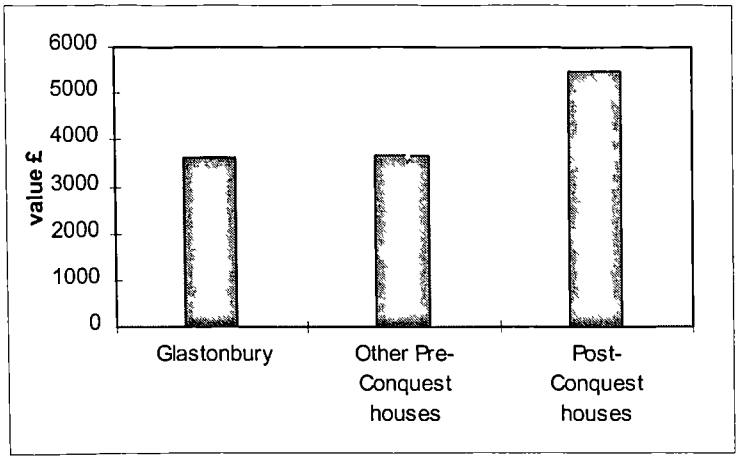

Figure 7.37 Total value of pre- and post-Conquest monasteries in 1535

This picture stands in stark contrast to Burton's (1999) recent study of Yorkshire, where the bulk of monastic endowment and landholding occurred in the two hundred years following the Conquest, and largely rested with the Cistercian and Augustinian houses. Similarly, William's (1990) work on the Welsh Cistercians presents the strong development of post-Conquest monastic landholding. Instead, this study of

Somerset and Wiltshire displays a landholding pattern that had its roots in the pre-Conquest period, and probably reflects the influence of the kingdom of Wessex. The ownership of extensive lands in the two counties by the houses of Winchester indicates this, as does the ownership of lands throughout Wessex by houses in Somerset and Wiltshire.